



EVENSON

his Work and his Personality

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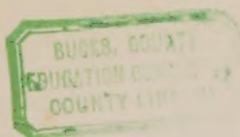


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ROBERT LOUIS  
STEVENSON:

HIS WORK AND HIS PERSONALITY



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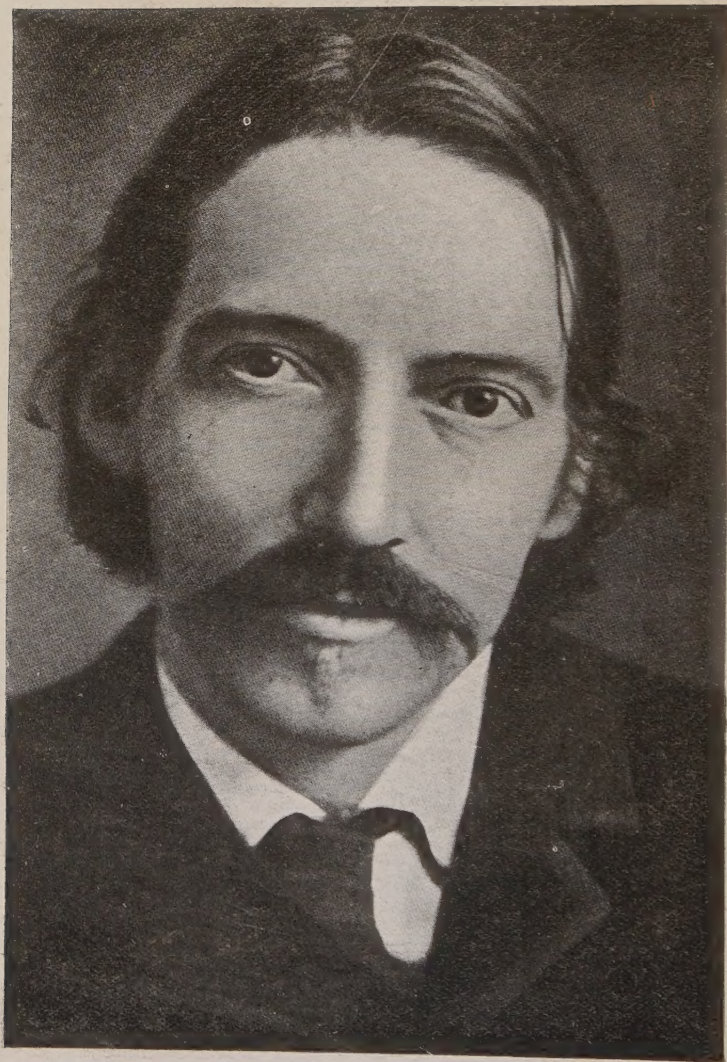
LONDON







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ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

# ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON:

HIS WORK AND HIS PERSONALITY

BY

Sidney Colvin  
Edmund Gosse  
Neil Munro  
Charles Lowe  
S. R. Crockett  
St. John Adcock  
Ian Maclaren

W. Robertson Nicoll  
Lloyd Osbourne  
Alfred Noyes  
Eve Blantyre Simpson  
Alice Gordon  
H. C. Beeching  
J. A. Hammerton

Y. Y., etc.

HODDER AND STOUGHTON  
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## PREFATORY NOTE

THERE were so many sides to the genius and character of Stevenson that one obtains, perhaps, a larger, more adequate view of both in a series of essays by several authors, some of whom knew him personally, than from a detailed biography or a critical study by any one writer. In this volume there are essays on Stevenson in his early days by Sir Sidney Colvin, Mr. Lloyd Osbourne, Mr. Charles Lowe, Miss Eve Blantyre Simpson, Miss Alice Gordon, and a vivid portrait of the younger Stevenson in one of Mr. Edmund Gosse's poems. There are glimpses of Stevenson in his later years scattered through various essays, and one may feel the charm of his personality in these as well as in Mr. Gosse's "To Tusitala at Samoa," Y. Y.'s "To Prospero at Samoa," and Sir W. Robertson Nicoll's "Home from the Hill." The essays on Stevenson's prose and poetry by Mr. Neil Munro, Mr. Alfred Noyes, S. R. Crockett, H. C. Beeching, and others, form, I think, as full, intimate and critical a survey of his work as is anywhere obtainable. Stevenson's "Books Which Have Influenced Me" originally appeared in the *British Weekly*; most of the other essays and two of the poems are reprinted from *The Bookman*. Mr. J. A. Hammerton's "With R. L. S. through the Land of War" has since been included

in his book, *Wrack of War* (John Murray) ; and Mr. Charles Lowe's reminiscences of Stevenson, here republished, with his permission, are I believe to be amplified and published before long in another form. My thanks are due to these and other authors who have kindly allowed their contributions to *The Bookman* to reappear in the following pages. Mr. Alfred Noyes's "Stevenson" was delivered as a lecture to the Stevenson Club ; other articles and poems are reprinted from books, and due acknowledgment for these is made in the Notes at the end of this volume. I would especially emphasise my indebtedness to Mr. Lloyd Osbourne and to Stevenson's publishers, Messrs. Chatto & Windus, Messrs. Heinemann, Messrs. Cassell and Messrs. Longmans, for their kindness in lending illustrations and permitting the use of items, pictorial and literary, referred to more at large in the Notes.

Most of what follows was in 1913 reproduced in a "Stevenson Extra Number" of *The Bookman*, which went out of print before the war, but as the demand for it has continued, it is now reissued in this different form, omitting two or three poems and several pictures, and adding six essays and seven new illustrations.

ST. J. A.

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ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON :  
A REMINISCENCE

BY CHARLES LOWE

CURIOSLY enough, it was in what might be called an arena of abstract science that I first made the acquaintance of a young man who is now one of the most distinguished *littérateurs* of the age. On a sunny spring morning, now, alas ! a score of years ago—sunny, though the huge stove was still roaring away in the corner with a rumbling sound like the rush of an express train through a tunnel—we were sitting in the mathematical class-room of the University of Edinburgh, awaiting the incoming of our dear old Professor (Kelland), I being then deep in the *Daily News* description of the German entry into Paris, when I felt a hand gently laid on my shoulder, and, turning round, beheld a young man with whose face I was quite familiar, though not yet cognisant of his name. Having always had a sharp and roving eye for varieties of type and character among my fellow-students, this particular youth had already arrested my attention by the possession of exterior

qualities which marked him off strongly from the rest of his comrades—a certain grace and refinement of manner and person not very common among the academic communities of Scotland, and withal a free and unconventional air with which a black velvet jacket and flowing flaxen locks were well matched. His whole appearance was much more indicative of the poet or the æsthete than of the scientist; and yet here was this attractive youth tapping my shoulder in one of the front benches of the mathematical class. Was not my name so and so, and was not I the fellow who had sent in a poem to the editors of the *University Magazine*, of whom, he added, he was one. His co-editor, who was sitting near him engaged in the perusal of a love sonnet instead of a treatise on logarithms, was another young man of equally fascinating exterior and charming manners—Walter Ferrier, son of a St. Andrews professor and grandson of Christopher North—a young man of high aspirations and great promise too soon blasted by death; and nothing would content these *Arcades ambo* but that they should at once launch out into the literary career and try their 'prentice hand on a monthly venture entitled the *Edinburgh University Magazine*—a venture which did not last very long, and probably, indeed, received its death blow from the verses,



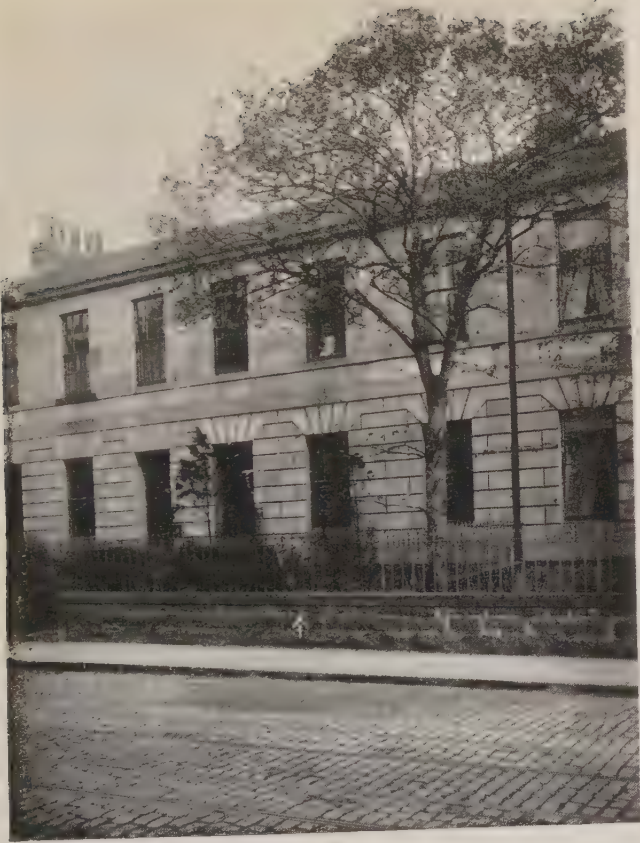
monopolising about a third of one number, which the editors were indiscreet enough to accept from me and insert in their otherwise sparkling enough pages. It was a cantata, partly in the Lowland Scots dialect, written in imitation of one of Burns's larger pieces ; and, though I would give my worst enemy a very considerable *douceur* rather than that he should now rake this effusion up against me, I am at the same time pleased and proud to think that it was the means of bringing me into personal contact with Robert Louis Stevenson, for that was the name of the young man who had tapped me on the shoulder. Stevenson was, on the whole, well pleased with my poem, though he insisted on making certain editorial emendations, some of which, however, I am bound to say did more credit to the delicacy of his taste than to the accuracy of that sense of rhythm of which he subsequently became so great a master. From the mathematical class-room we hastened to repair to the privacy of a snug house of entertainment close by, called " The Pump," there to continue our discussion over Edinburgh ale and cold meat pies ; and I cannot remember that ever I spent a more pleasant or, indeed, a more inspiring hour, in Auld Reekie than the first one I thus passed with Robert Stevenson. From that single hour's conversation with the embryo author

of *Treasure Island* I certainly derived more intellectual and personal stimulus than ever was imparted to me by any six months' course of lectures within the walls of "good King James's College." He was so perfectly frank and ingenuous, so ebullient and open-hearted, so sunny, so sparkling, so confiding, so vaulting in his literary ambitions, and withal so widely read and well informed—notwithstanding his youth, for he could scarcely have been out of his teens then—that I could not help saying to myself that here was a young man who had commended himself more to my approval and emulation than any other of my fellow-students. His friends, I gathered from him, were fain that he should qualify himself for the career of an engineer, in imitation of some other members of his family ; but it was perfectly clear to me, privately, that his friends had chosen the wrong profession for him, and I rather think I jocosely remarked to him at the time that if ever he built a bridge or constructed a lighthouse, I would at once forgo my claims to be a fairly good judge of capacity and character. His conversation in itself certainly impressed me with the fact that literature was his future *métier*, and this conviction was deepened by a perusal of some of the articles which he wrote for his *University Magazine*. One of these, on

“The Philosophy of Nomenclature,” was an amplification of a reflection from Tristram Shandy (and how enviably familiar, too, he seemed to be with all the novelists of the last century!) : “How many Cæsars and Pompeys, by mere inspiration of their names, have been rendered worthy of them! And how many are there who might have done exceedingly well in the world had not their characters and spirits been totally depressed and Nicodemus’d into nothing”; and though the paper was not signed, yet its authorship stood revealed by the avowal: “As a schoolboy, I remember the pride with which I hailed Robin Hood, Robert Bruce, and Robert le Diable as my *name fellows*.” I have made particular reference to this juvenile effusion, which betrayed the making of the future stylist and story-teller, as, in turning over a volume of his essays the other day (*Virginibus Puerisque*), I found him, in his charming paper on “The English Admirals,” harping on the same favourite chord, as thus: “Men of high destinies have high-sounding names. Pym and Habakkuk may do pretty well, but they must not think to cope with the Cromwells and Isaiahs. And you could not find a better case in point than that of the English Admirals.”

Young Stevenson devoted much more of his time to the fortunes of his *Magazine* than to the

attainment of merit-marks in his lecture-rooms, where, indeed, his appearance was less the rule than its exception. He had a supreme contempt for plodding and prize-taking, of which he writes in his *Apology for Idleness* : “ They have been to school or college, but all the time they have had their eye on the medal.” He scorned the medal, and another sentence in the same essay is a pure bit of personal autobiography, as far as his academic career was concerned : “ Extreme busyness,” he writes, “ whether at school or college, kirk or market, indicates a system of deficient vitality ; while a faculty for idleness implies a catholic appetite and a strong sense of personal identity.” Stevenson, I say, despised the medal ; he was none of your examination crammers and competition wallahs ; but, on the other hand, he was as omnivorous a general reader—if chiefly, perchance, in the lighter pastures of literature—as was young Teufelsdröckh in the university library of Weissnichtswow ; and he has already reaped his reward for having thus followed the bent of his own tastes in spite of the spirit and formulas of his time. The fame to which he has attained has not at all surprised me ; but I cannot help observing that there is one element in his literary workmanship which has always been a puzzle to me, and that is his perfect mastery of



*Photo by T. Patrick,  
Edinburgh.*

NO. 8, HOWARD PLACE, EDINBURGH.

Here Stevenson was born on November 13th, 1850.





"BABY TO BAR."

A series of Portraits, kindly lent by Mrs. M. C. Balfour.



From *The Works of R. L. Stevenson* (Pentland Edition).  
By permission of Messrs. Cassell & Co.





*Photo by T. Patrick, Edinburgh.*

17, HERIOT ROW, EDINBURGH.

"In January, 1853, Stevenson's parents moved to 1, Inverleith Terrace, and in May, 1857, to 17, Heriot Row, which continued to be their Edinburgh home until the death of Thomas Stevenson in 1887."—*The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*. Edited by Sir Sidney Colvin. (Methuen and Heinemann.)

Lowland Scotch as this language was spoken, among others, by David Balfour, of Shaws, and Alan Breck Stewart. As a spoken tongue, the language of Burns is fast falling into disuse, especially in the urban and more educated communities of Scotland ; nor among the gentry and upper middle classes would you now find many, if any, who could hold their own in a Doric dialogue with an Angus or a Lothian peasant, as this could have been done, for example, by Walter Scott, to whom the speech of Allan Ramsay was the vernacular of his father's fireside. Nothing in the talk, accent, or manner of Stevenson suggested that his education had been anything but purely English, or that he was not a child of the new time in Scotland, with all its Anglicising and obliterating tendencies. And yet I am sure that the Wizard of the North himself never handled the " braid Scotch " with more purity and skill than has been done by the delineator of the *Master of Ballantrae*—a fact which must add another bright ray to that lustrous star of his fame, of which I have watched the course with a special interest and admiration ever since it began to show above the lofty, rugged outlines of Arthur's Seat, until it assumed the appearance of a fixed position in the firmament above a solitary and sunlit isle in the far-off Pacific sea.

1891.

## WHEN STEVENSON WAS YOUNG\*

BY SIR SIDNEY COLVIN

. . . The recollections that remain with me from the next few years are partly of two visits I paid him in the course of that first winter (1873-1874) on the Riviera ; partly of visits he paid me in the Norwood cottage, or in another cottage I rented a little later at Hampstead, or later again in college rooms which I occupied as a professor at Cambridge ; partly from his various descents upon or passages through London, made sometimes from Edinburgh and sometimes from France, after his return in 1874 to his now reconciled home. The points in his character these recollections chiefly illustrate are, first, the longing for a life of action and adventure, which in an ordinary youth might have passed as a matter of course but in one already so stricken in health seemed pathetically vain ; next his inborn faculty—a very much rarer gift—as an artist in letters, and the scrupulous self-training by which almost from boyhood he had been privately disciplining

\* From *Memories and Notes*. (Edward Arnold).

it ; then the intensely, quite exceptionally, observing and loving interest he took in young children : and, above all, that magic power he had of winning the delighted affection, the immediate confidence, of men and women of the most various sorts and conditions, always excepting those hide-bound in starched propriety or conventional officialdom, whom he had a scarce less unfailing power of putting against him at first sight. . . .

His shabby clothes came partly from lack of cash, partly from lack of care, partly, as I think I have said elsewhere, from a hankering after social experiment and adventure, and a dislike of being identified with any special class or caste. Certainly conventional and respectable attire, when by exception he wore it, did not in those days sit him well. Going with me one day from Hampstead to the Royal Academy Exhibition, he thought such attire would be expected of him, and looked out a black frock-coat and tall hat which he had once worn at a wedding. I can see now the odd figure he made as he walked with me in that unwonted garb down Regent Street and along Piccadilly. True, he carried his tall hat not on his head, but in his hand, because it chafed him. Also, being fresh from an enthusiastic study of the prosody of Milton, he kept declaiming to me

with rapturous comments as we walked the lines and cadences which chiefly haunted him :

“ His wrath  
Burned after them to the bottomless pit,”  
“ Like Teneriffe or Atlas, unremoved——”  
“ All night the dreadless angel, unpursued——”  
“ Oh ! how comely it is and how reviving  
To the spirits of just men long opprest ! ”

It was while he declaimed these last two lines, the opening of a famous chorus in *Samson Agonistes*, that the gates of Burlington House, I remember, enfolded us. . . .

After his return from the Riviera in 1874 Stevenson was elected to the Savile Club. . . . This little society had been founded on a principle aimed against the stand-offishness customary in English club life, and all members were expected to hold themselves predisposed to talk and liable to accost without introduction. . . . On his visits to London he generally lunched there, and at the meal and afterwards came to be accepted and habitually surrounded as a radiating centre of good talk, a kind of ideal incarnation of the spirit of the society. Comparatively rare as they were, I believe that both his presences in those days and his tradition subsequently contributed as much as anything towards the success and prosperity of the club.

## STEVENSON'S TWO MOTHERS

BY EVE BLANTYRE SIMPSON

LOUIS STEVENSON, in one of his chance autobiographic glimpses, tells us how he came to accompany his father on an inspection of the harbour lights of Fife. "It was," he says, "my first professional tour, my first journey in the complete character of man *without the help of petticoats*." A great influence had these petticoats in bending his thoughts aright, when he was but a green twig. Their patience, their cheerfulness, flooded the dawn of his life with sunshine, and the very remembrance of these palmy days filled him with joyousness, for, as Sidney Smith says, "If you make children happy, you will make them happy twenty years hence by the memory of it." He was a lucky-starred boy. Fortune had gifted him with two sterling mothers, for the nurse to whom he so touchingly dedicated his *Garden of Verses* held a place in his affections only second to one. Along with Mrs. Stevenson, this mother of his adoption, Alison Cunningham, tended him



with a care to which he owed his life. His nurse is now the only one of the petticoated angels of his infant life left.\* Mrs. Stevenson, in May, 1897, was laid beside her husband under the good Scots sods their son had longed to rest below. She had not dreamed she would have wept the eyes that should have wept for her, and had, when left a widow, transplanted herself and the endeared belongings of her married home to Samoa. When her son died she returned to the Old World for one tie she had left there—her elder sister (the Auntie† of Louis' Verses), who had always been a centre in her family. This Miss Balfour had mothered Mrs. Stevenson in her school days, and now the later generation of orphans she had reared being started in life, she needed her younger sister to be eyes and ears to her, when sight and hearing were failing. Glad were Mrs. Stevenson's old friends when she re-settled in Edinburgh with this senior sister, in a house overlooking river and sea, with one of those unique views which only a city built as Auld Reekie is, can command.

Mrs. Stevenson courageously faced her sorrow. She remained as of yore, bright and calm. Her son, I heard, when a grown man, recall how proud

\* She died July, 1913.

† "Chief of our Aunts—not only I,  
But all your dozen nurslings cry,  
What did the other children do,  
And what were childhood wanting you?"



he was of her clear-cut features, her gracious manner when he went, under her wing, to children's parties. He boasted no child at these entertainments had so pretty a mother as he. Hers was a perennial beauty. With her cultured mind, her goodly presence, strangers who latterly met her would not credit she was nearing threescore and ten. The son who had gone before her was the theme she loved to hear others discourse on. Her unceasing interest in everything connected with him, her every thought given so wholly to him, made her listeners realise how great was her loss, how great was her love. She, so "austerely led," had never been otherwise than "well content." When people marvelled at her vivacity, she bravely replied she had surely had small cause to repine with a happy record of married life to dwell on, and forty-five years of her son's companionship granted to her. If her Louis had remained unknown to fame, to hear her speak of him would have drawn about her pleased listeners, for she told reminiscences of him with such a spice of wit and graphicness that they fastened on the hearer's memory.

Alison Cunningham came to share with her the care of Louis when he was eighteen months old, and for stark love and kindness she too would have followed him into far countries. "Cummy,"

as her small charge promptly christened her, hailed from Torryburn, a village of white crow-stepped houses, which lies facing the sun on the edge of the Forth. Her people had belonged for generations to this west neuk of Fife, and she had endless tales to tell of its local legendry and historic lore. She knew gruesome facts of resurrectionists who lifted from Torryburn's graveyard and its neighbour, Culross Abbey. Her collection of stories were doubtless a mine of wealth to young R. L. S., for, like her mistress, Cummy had the gift of picturing in words. She had had the advantage of a sound education, for to finish her schooling she went daily to Dunfermline, five miles away. This distance she proudly records she covered in a marvellously short time, for Louis's "Comely Cummy," as he called her, along with her refined features, is still trig and active. When she went back for her holidays to red-roofed Torryburn she received and preserved many letters from her charge. Mrs. Stevenson wrote these early epistles to little Loo's dictation. They are full of childish reiterations, hopes that his Cummy will come back soon, and questions as to the people in her old-world village she had made him acquainted with by her descriptions. He informs her, "Catherine sleeps in my room because *Papa said it*," and that Papa said it, has

an authoritative brevity which even His Majesty Louis the Worshipped did not gainsay. At the end of one letter he signs himself "Your loving Robert Louis Stevenson," but fearing this full and then seldom used title sounded stiff and estranged, he ordered his mother between the "loving" and his baptismal name to insert "little son," knowing that these two short words would act as a magnet on Cummy, and insure her return, despite the attractions of that El Dorado he longed to visit—Torryburn. Cummy tells how, when ailing, he would, after tossing sleepless, desire to hear comforting words from Scripture read, to be a rod and staff to him in the darksome, terror-haunted vale of night. Willingly good Cummy complied with his wish, and read till she saw through her "kind voice" he had found rest. In the morning, when he awoke refreshed, and the sun shone into his room, he again issued his constant command, "Read to me, Cummy." His nurse, knowing well his fears with the shadows of night had flown away, and the "Old, Old Story" would be laid aside till he again traversed the "uneven land," with well-pretended ignorance would ask, "What chapter will I read to you, my laddie?" But her laddie no longer a saint would be, and with the unhypocritical honesty of childhood replied, "Why, Cummy, it's daylight now ;

put away the Bible and reach over for that new book of Ballantyne's." Early on him came the desire to write. Cummy depicts how he often slipped his hand into hers when he was a petticoated boy of three and four, and dragged her off to the nursery, signalled to her to lock the door, and putting his finger to his lips to enjoin secrecy, whispered as loud as a stage conspirator, "I've got a story to tell, Cummy; you write it." "He just havered," says Cummy, smiling yet at the recollection of her little lad, whose keen eyes glowed all the darker then in contrast with the childish yellow hair which crowned his head. Cummy entered heartily into the mystery and conspiracy of the secretive tale-maker. His women-folk were always slavishly good-humoured to their young autocrat, doing his whimsical bidding, when practicable, without hesitation. "I wrote down every word he spoke," says Cummy, "it pleased the bairn, and I read his havers to his mother at the nursery fire." When others spoke of him as the masterly master of his pen, the petticoated guardians of his youth still loved to speak of him as Smout—his father's name for him. They pictured him hiding in the manse garden at Colinton, while they, the seekers, wandered about pretending they could not see the girlishly-dressed boy in blue so obviously

hidden. Not only "the little feet along the floor" did the mother often chance to hear in after years, but also his piping voice, asking in the childish refrain, "How far is it to Babylon?" as he and his cousins sang by the water door, wondering if they would reach that distant city "by candle light." Cummy kept a journal in these days, in which she registered small Smoutie's first words, his pretty sayings, his precocious chatter, his fertile make-believes. Thinking she was nigh unto death once, she burned this chronicle. "I mind every word he said to me," she says, "and when his mamma and I looked at the photographs of him in the frocks I made for him, we seemed to see him playing about again so happy like." Their minds were so filled with him they never quite realised his own words :

" For long ago the truth to say,  
He has grown up and gone away,  
And it is but a child of air  
That lingers in the garden there."

"On my tomb, if ever I have one, I mean to get these words inscribed, 'He clung to his paddle,'" Louis said in his first book, *The Inland Voyage*. In this watery journey the *Arethusa* had borne him gallantly down the Oise, till it rushed below a fallen tree, and then the canoe absconding, like

Absalom's steed, left her skipper entangled in the branches. "Death himself had me by the heels," he wrote, "for this was his last ambushade, and he must now personally join in the fray. And *still I clung to my paddle.*" The paddle with which he plied his course in life, and steered therewith into our hearts was in reality his pen. He clung to it despite adverse currents, and moreover wielded it with a boyish gaiety of spirit which showed his heroic pluck. "Gladly I lived," he truly sang. His contented, happy temperament he owed in a great measure to the help of the petticoats who shielded his youthful years. They never willingly thwarted or out of laziness refused any reasonable request of the delicate boy they cherished. They petted him without spoiling him. They taught him despite the many months his feeble health held him captive in the house, *to see*, for as Ruskin says, "Thousands can think for one who can see; to see clearly is poetry, prophecy, religion, all in one":

"The world is so full of a number of things  
I am sure we should all be happy as kings."

he wrote in after life, which was a sentiment he learned when he was a light-hearted ruler of the nursery realm, cheerful if autocratic.

These two fervent smiths who forged this



bright sword\* of literature had good metal wherewith to fashion their blade and they knew it, for they proudly dreamed of a brilliant future for their little Loo, even when he dictated havers to Cummy. He put up a door-plate on 17, Heriot Row, with "R. L. Stevenson, Advocate," thereon; they knew his deed box in the Parliament House was guiltless of briefs, and everyone else thought he was a born idler, or as he himself said, "base," not to follow the profession of his fathers. They believed he would yet shine. Instead of dry legal pages he was these years preparing to bring into life David Balfour, to resurrect Lord Braxfield as Weir of Hermiston, and brighten our shelves with *Memories and Portraits*. His first essays in print, *The Charity Bazaar*, *The Pentland Rising*, and a few papers in the *Edinburgh University Magazine* (now all so valued by the bibliomaniac) were often read and praised by his first amanuenses and critics. His mother with keen maternal insight early guessed wherein his genius lay, guessed what would be his ablest weapon, and fostered his inclination to hold by the pen as he held by the truant *Arethusa's* paddle. In his

\* "So like a sword the son shall roam  
On nobler missions sent;  
And as the smith remained at home  
In peaceful turret pent,  
So sits the while the mother well content."

Underwoods, by R. L. S.



Table Talk Shirley bears this out. "It was from this cottage (Swanston) that possibly the most charming of our younger Scottish writers went out into the world to try his luck. Hardly anyone except his mother guessed as yet what was in store. But she was prescient as mothers are."

"Be good yourself—make others happy," Mrs. Stevenson wrote as a motto on a quilt after her signature. "That," she added, as she finished the "happy," "is the Gospel according to R. L. Stevenson." It was a gospel she preached by precept and example, and she took pains to impress it on her little son, so when he grew "well and old," it tided him over many of the ills of life.

Of his "second mother, my first wife," as he called his faithful Alison Cunningham, bereft of her boy and of her mistress, who so generously let her share her only child with her, the mistress who grew into Cummy's best friend, she was left as she with hopefulness said, "not for long." Mrs. Stevenson on her last visit to Cummy's snug home noted the crape still on her dress which she had donned when the fell news came from Samoa. "Don't take it off, Cummy," she said, as she touched this trapping of woe. She well knew Cummy's mourning was not only an outward sign

of grief. These two angels "of his infant life," overcoming their national Scots reserve, had for his sake proudly worn their hearts upon their sleeves, so he who ran might read engraven thereon his first mother's last word on earth—"Louis."

1897.

## BOOKS WHICH INFLUENCED ME

BY ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

[NOTE.—*This was contributed as one of a series of articles that appeared in the "British Weekly" in 1887.*]

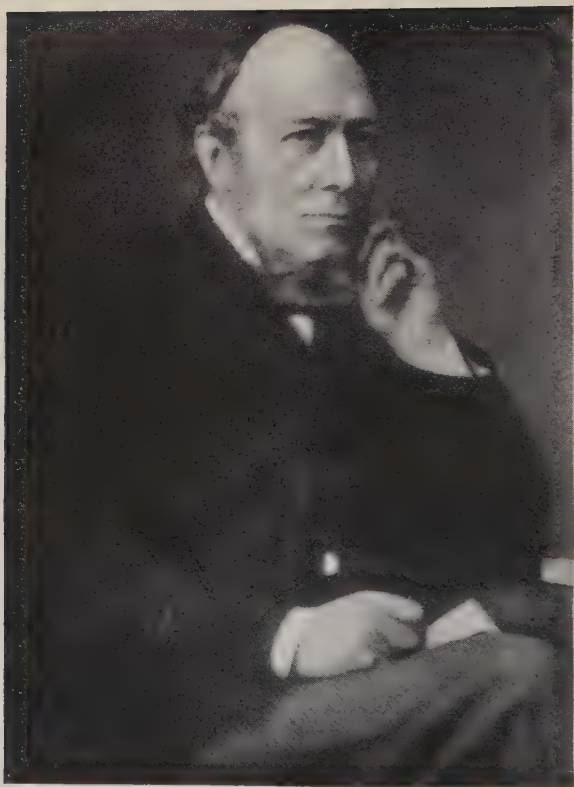
THE editor has somewhat insidiously laid a trap for his correspondents, the question put appearing at first so innocent, truly cutting so deep. It is not, indeed, until after some reconnaissance and review that the writer awakens to find himself engaged upon something in the nature of autobiography ; or, perhaps worse, upon a chapter in the life of that little, beautiful brother whom we once all had, and whom we have all lost and mourned : the man we ought to have been, the man we hoped to be. But when word has been passed (even to an editor) it should, if possible, be kept ; and if sometimes I am wise and say too little, and sometimes weak and say too much, the blame must lie at the door of the person who entrapped me.

The most influential books, and the truest in their influence, are works of fiction. They do



*Photo by T. Patrick Edinburgh.*

R. L. S. AND HIS FATHER.



*Photo by John Moffatt, Edinburgh.  
From Stevenson's Works,  
Pentland Edition (Cassells.)*

THOMAS STEVENSON,  
THE FATHER OF R. L. S.

"His entire life was devoted to the unremitting pursuit of a scientific profession . . . yet it was from him that Louis derived all the romantic and artistic elements that drew him away from engineering."—Graham Balfour's *Life of Stevenson*. (Methuen.)



From *Stevenson's Works*,  
Pentland Edition (Cassells).

MRS. STEVENSON,  
THE MOTHER OF R. L. S.

"When he was small she read to him a great deal, and to her! he owed his first acquaintance with much that is best in literature."—  
Graham Balfour's *Life of Stevenson*. (Methuen.)



*Photo by T. Patrick, Edinburgh.*

R. L. S.'s AUNT.

The "Chief of our Aunts," of *A Child's Garden of Verses*.



not pin the reader to a dogma which he must afterwards discover to be inexact ; they do not teach him a lesson which he must afterwards unlearn. They repeat, they re-arrange, they clarify the lessons of life ; they disengage us from ourselves, they constrain us to the acquaintance of others ; and they show us the web of experience, not as we can see it for ourselves, but with a singular change—that monstrous, consuming ego of ours being, for the nonce, struck out. To be so, they must be reasonably true to the human comedy ; and any work that is so serves the turn of instruction. But the course of our education is answered best by those poems and romances where we breathe a magnanimous atmosphere of thought and meet generous and pious characters. Shakespeare has served me best. Few living friends have had upon me an influence so strong for good as Hamlet or Rosalind. The last character, already well beloved in the reading, I had the good fortune to see, I must think in an impressionable hour, played by Mrs. Scott Siddons. Nothing has ever more moved, more delighted, more refreshed me ; nor has the influence quite passed away. Kent's brief speech over the dying Lear had a great effect upon my mind, and was the burthen of my reflections for long : so profoundly, so touchingly generous did it appear in

sense, so overpowering in expression. Perhaps my dearest and best friend outside of Shakespeare is d'Artagnan—the elderly d'Artagnan of the *Vicomte de Bragelonne*. I know not a more human soul, nor, in any way, a finer ; I shall be very sorry for the man who is so much of a pedant in morals that he cannot learn from the Captain of Musketeers. Lastly, I must name the *Pilgrim's Progress* : a book that breathes of every beautiful and valuable emotion.

But of works of art little can be said ; their influence is profound and silent, like the influence of nature ; they mould by contact ; we drink them up like water, and are bettered, yet know not how. It is in books more specifically didactic that we can follow out the effect, and distinguish and weigh and compare. A book which has been very influential upon me fell early into my hands, and so may stand first ; though I think its influence was only sensible later on, and perhaps still keeps growing, for it is a book not easily outlived : the *Essais* of Montaigne. That temperate and genial picture of life is a great gift to place in the hands of persons of to-day ; they will find in these smiling pages a magazine of heroism and wisdom, all of an antique strain ; they will have their “ linen decencies ” and excited orthodoxies fluttered, and will (if they have any gift of reading)

perceive that these have not been fluttered without some excuse and ground of reason ; and (again if they have any gift of reading) they will end by seeing that this old gentleman was in a dozen ways a finer fellow, and held in a dozen ways a nobler view of life, than they or their contemporaries.

The next book, in order of time, to influence me was the New Testament, and in particular the Gospel according to St. Matthew. I believe it would startle and move anyone, if they could make a certain effort of imagination and read it freshly like a book, not droningly and dully like a portion of the Bible. Anyone would then be able to see in it those truths which we are all courteously supposed to know and all modestly refrain from applying. But upon this subject it is perhaps better to be silent.

I come next to Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, a book of singular service, a book which tumbled the world upside down for me, blew into space a thousand cobwebs of genteel and ethical illusion ; and, having thus shaken my tabernacle of lies, set me back again upon a strong foundation of all the original and manly virtues. But it is, once more, only a book for those who have the gift of reading. I will be very frank—I believe it is so with all good books, except, perhaps, fiction.

The average man lives, and must live, so wholly in convention, that gunpowder charges of the truth are more apt to discompose than to invigorate his creed. Either he cries out upon blasphemy and indecency, and crouches the closer around that little idol of part-truths and part-conveniences which is the contemporary deity, or he is convinced by what is new, forgets what is old, and becomes truly blasphemous and indecent himself. New truth is only useful to supplement the old : rough truth is only wanted to expand, not to destroy, our civil and often elegant conventions. He who cannot judge had better stick to fiction and the daily papers. There he will get little harm, and, in the first at least, some good.

Close upon the back of my discovery of Whitman I came under the influence of Herbert Spencer. No more persuasive rabbi exists, and few better. How much of his vast structure will bear the touch of Time, how much is clay and how much brass, it were too curious to inquire. But his words, if dry, are always manly and honest : there dwells in his pages a spirit of highly abstract joy, plucked naked, like an algebraic symbol, but still joyful ; and the reader will find there a *caput-mortuum* of piety, with little indeed of its loveliness, but with most of its essentials : and these two qualities make him a wholesome, as

his intellectual vigour makes him a bracing, writer. I should be much of a hound if I lost my gratitude to Herbert Spencer.

*Goethe's Life* by Lewes had a great importance for me when it first fell into my hands—a strange instance of the partiality of man's good and man's evil. I know no one whom I less admire than Goethe ; he seems a very epitome of the sins of genius ; breaking open the doors of private life, and wantonly wounding friends, in the crowning offence of *Werther* ; and in his own character, a mere pen and ink Napoleon, conscious of the rights and duties of superior talents as a Spanish inquisitor was conscious of the rights and duties of his office. And yet in his fine devotion to his art, in his honest and serviceable friendship for Schiller, what lessons are contained. Biography, usually so false to its office, does here for once perform for us some of the work of fiction, reminding us, that is, of the truly mingled tissue of man's nature, and how huge faults and shining virtues cohabit and persevere in the same character. History serves us well to this effect ; but in the originals, not in the pages of the popular epitomiser, who is bound, by the very nature of his task, to make us feel the difference of epochs instead of the essential identity of man ; and even in the originals, only to those who can



recognise their own human virtues and defects in strange forms, often inverted and under strange names, often interchanged. Martial is a poet of no good repute, and it gives a man new thoughts to read his works dispassionately, and find in this unseemly jester's serious passages the image of a kind, wise, and self-respecting gentleman. It is customary, I suppose, in reading Martial, to leave out these pleasant verses ; I never heard of them, at least, until I found them for myself ; and this partiality is one among a thousand things that help to build up our distorted and hysterical conception of the great Roman Empire.

This brings us by a natural transition to a very noble book—the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius. The dispassionate gravity, the noble forgetfulness of self, the tenderness of others, that are there expressed, and were practised on so great a scale in the life of its writer, make this book a book quite by itself. No one can read it and not be moved. Yet it scarcely or rarely appeals to the feelings—those very mobile, those not very trusty parts of man. Its address lies farther back, its lesson comes more deeply home ; when you have read, you carry away with you a memory of the man himself ; it is as though you had touched a loyal hand, looked into brave eyes, and made a noble friend ; there is another bond on you



thenceforward, binding you to life and to the love of virtue.

Wordsworth should perhaps come next. Every one has been influenced by Wordsworth, and it is hard to tell precisely how. A certain innocence, a rugged austerity of joy, a sight of the stars, "the silence that there is among the hills," something of the cold thrill of dawn, cling to his work and give it a particular address to what is best in us. I do not know that you learn a lesson; you need not—Mill did not—agree with any one of his beliefs; and yet the spell is cast. Such are the best teachers: a dogma learned is only a new error—the old one was perhaps as good; but a spirit communicated is a perpetual possession. These best teachers climb beyond teaching to the place of art; it is themselves, and what is best in themselves, that they communicate.

I should never forgive myself if I forgot *The Egoist*. It is art if you like, but it belongs purely to didactic art; and from all the novels I have read (and I have read thousands) stands in a place by itself. Here is a Nathan for the modern David; here is a book to send the blood into men's faces. Satire, the angry picture of human faults, is not great art; we can all be angry with our neighbour; what we want is to be shown not his defects, of which we are too conscious, but his

merits, to which we are too blind. And *The Egoist* is a satire; so much must be allowed; but it is a satire of a singular quality, which tells you nothing of that obvious mote, which is engaged from first to last with that invisible beam. It is yourself that is hunted down, these are your own faults that are dragged into the day and numbered, with lingering relish, with cruel cunning and precision. A young friend of Mr. Meredith's (as I have the story) came to him in an agony: "This is too bad of you," he cried. "Willoughby is me." "No, my dear fellow," said the author, "he is all of us." I have read *The Egoist* five or six times myself, and I mean to read it again; for I am like the young friend of the anecdote—I think Willoughby an unmanly but a very serviceable exposure of myself.

I suppose, when I am done, I shall find that I have forgotten much that was most influential, as I see already I have forgotten Thoreau, and Hazlitt, whose paper *On the Spirit of Obligations* was a turning point in my life, and Penn, whose little book of aphorisms had a brief but strong effect on me, and Mitford's *Tales of Old Japan*, wherein I learned for the first time the proper attitude of any rational man to his country's laws—a secret found, and kept, in the Asiatic Islands. That I should commemorate all, is more than I

can hope or the editor could ask. It will be more to the point, after having said so much upon improving books, to say a word or two about the improvable reader. The gift of reading, as I have called it, is not very common, nor very generally understood. It consists, first of all, in a vast intellectual endowment—a free grace, I find I must call it—by which a man rises to understand that he is not punctually right, nor those from whom he differs absolutely wrong. He may hold dogmas; he may hold them passionately; and he may know that others hold them but coldly, or hold them differently, or hold them not at all. Well, if he has the gift of reading, these others will be full of meat for him. They will see the other side of propositions and the other side of virtues. He need not change his dogma for that, but he may change his reading of that dogma, and he must supplement and correct his deductions from it. A human truth, which is always very much a lie, hides as much of life as it displays. It is men who hold another truth, or, as it seems to us, perhaps, a dangerous lie, who can extend our restricted field of knowledge, and rouse our drowsy consciences. Something that seems quite new, or that seems insolently false or very dangerous, is the test of a reader. If he tries to see what it means, what truth excuses it, he has the gift,

and let him read. If he is merely hurt, or offended, or exclaims upon his author's folly, he had better take to the daily papers ; he will never be a reader.

And here, with the aptest illustrative force, after I have laid down my part-truth, I must step in with its opposite. For, after all, we are vessels of a very limited content. Not all men can read all books ; it is only in a chosen few that any man will find his appointed food ; and the fittest lessons are the most palatable, and make themselves welcome to the mind. A writer learns this early ; and it is his chief support ; he goes on unafraid, laying down the law ; and he is sure at heart that most of what he says is demonstrably false, and much of a mingled strain, and some hurtful, and very little good for service ; but he is sure besides that when his words fall into the hands of any genuine reader, they will be weighed and winnowed, and only that which suits will be assimilated ; and when they fall into the hands of one who cannot intelligently read, they come there quite silent and inarticulate, falling upon deaf ears, and his secret is kept as if he had not written.

## HOW I FIRST SAW STEVENSON

BY LLOYD OSBOURNE

IN February, 1876, we were living in Paris, a little family of four—my mother, my sister Isobel, whom I considered as “grown-up,” though she was but a few years older than myself, my brother Hervey, and I. I was eight; Hervey, a lovely little fellow with long golden curls, was five. We were miserably poor; it seems to me that I was always hungry; I can remember yet how I used to glue myself to the baker’s windows and stare longingly at the bread within. Then my little brother fell ill of a lingering and baffling ailment; nobody knew what was the matter with him; for weeks he lay dying while my mother pawned her trinkets to buy him delicacies and toys. Even after all these years the memory of that ebbing life recurs to me with an intolerable pathos—the wasted baby hands, the burning eyes, the untouched toys, the untasted hot-house grapes lying on the counterpane. Then he died, and we followed him to Père Lachaise where we could only afford one of those temporary French

graves, surely one of the cruellest in the world, from which the bones are flung into the catacombs at the expiration of five years.

All this had told on me. The doctor said, with a gravity that thrilled me with a sense of self-importance: "Madam, it is essential that you should take this child to the country. He is in a serious nervous condition, and if you do not take him to the country at once I cannot answer for the consequences."

A friendly art student was called into consultation, a young American with an immense black beard and a voice that sounded strangely booming in our silent and stricken household, who advised my mother to try Grez—a delightful old village on the edge of the Forest of Fontainebleau, and distant some fifty or sixty miles from Paris. He praised the comfortable old inn; described its secluded garden running down to the river; spoke of his own eagerness to return to this charming and tranquil country which was as yet unspoiled. But——! A shiver of uneasiness passed through us. The booming young man hesitated and looked embarrassed. Had he indicated this paradise only to snatch it away again? It appeared that the old inn was monopolised all summer by a number of wild artists and bohemians, who might resent the



intrusion of—of a lady with children. My mother, indeed, had to take the risk of its being made “impossible” for her. The booming young man looked much concerned and spoke apprehensively of the “two Stevensons.” The “two Stevensons” were the ringleaders in everything. Nobody who failed to please the “two Stevensons” could possibly stay in Grez. That was the risk we had to face later on when the inn should fill for the summer—that the “two Stevensons” might force us to leave.

The “two Stevensons” were Robert Louis Stevenson, and his cousin Robert Alan Mowbray Stevenson.

We went to Grez, which was even more attractive than it had been described to us, and spent what was to me the three happiest weeks of my childhood. Not only were there the ample meals, the boating and fishing on the river, the innkeeper’s little boys to play with, and long, interesting rambles, but I was exquisitely conscious of my mother’s tenderness and of the growing consolation she found in me. It was so early in the season that we had the inn all to ourselves, though always in our minds was a vision of those dreadful Stevensons returning to drive us forth. My little heart was filled to bursting at such injustice. We, as a family,

seemed so harmless, so sad in our bereavement, so worthy, indeed, of the consideration the kindly village people gave us, yet these tyrants had somehow the power to say to us : " Grez is ours. Get out ! "

We went back to Paris ; presumably our apartment was given up and our odds and ends of furniture placed in storage : I remember nothing but a visit to Père Lachaise, and of our standing forlornly in the rain beside Hervey's grave. Then somehow—I forget the intervening details—we were again in Grez, with the weather becoming warmer every day and the dreadful Stevensons more imminent. Some of the artists had already arrived, amiable young fellows who painted in the fields under prodigious white umbrellas, and who seemed to find nothing especially affronting in the presence of my pretty mother and very pretty sister.

At last, and the scene is as clear to me as though it had happened yesterday, I can recall my mother and myself gazing down from our bedroom window at Isobel, who was speaking in the court below to the first of the arriving Stevensons—" Bob " Stevenson as he was always called—a dark, roughly-dressed man, as lithe and graceful as a Mexican vaquero and evoking something of the same misgiving. He smiled pleasantly,

hat in hand, with a mocking expression that I learned afterwards was habitual with him, and which reminded me of the wolf in "Little Red Riding Hood." I suffocated with terror and suspense. In my innocence I thought he might suddenly strike Isobel. When my sister turned away, still unharmed, I felt an unspeakable relief. Then she ran up to our room, laughing with excitement, to tell us that "Bob" was a most agreeable and entertaining man, who was much amused at the way he had been misrepresented to us. In fact, he had been most deferential to her, and my sister's eyes were shining at the obvious impression she had made.

With "Bob" on our side—and he soon became very much a friend—all our trepidations subsided, and a curious reversal took place in our attitude towards that other Stevenson, that unknown "Louis" as everyone called him.

Louis, it seemed, was everybody's hero; Louis was the most wonderful and inspiring of men; his wit, his sayings, his whole piquant attitude towards life were unending subjects of conversation. Everybody said, "Wait till Louis gets here," with an eager and expectant air.

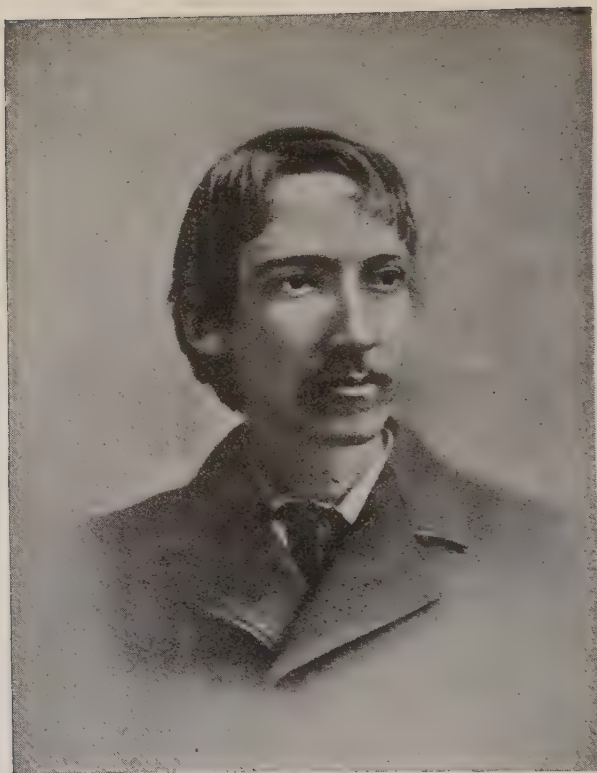
All my previous fear of him had disappeared, and in its place was a worshipping awe. He had become my hero, too, this wonderful Louis

Stevenson, who was so picturesquely gliding towards Grez in a little sailing canoe, and who camped out every night in a tent. How I longed for his coming, and yet how I dreaded it. Such a glorious being could not be expected to notice a little boy—even a worshipping little boy. How often I wished I had Hervey's golden hair and angelic beauty ; how I wished my mother had a bright blue velvet dress such as I had seen women wear in Paris. " Louis " would give but one look at us and then turn away. What interest could we have to a person who travelled everywhere in a sailing canoe, and whose life was a succession of the most thrilling episodes ?

Then in the dusk of a summer's day, as we all sat at dinner about the long table d'hôte, some sixteen or eighteen people, of whom my mother and sister were the only women and I the only child, there was a startling sound at one of the open windows giving on the street, and in vaulted a young man with a dusty knapsack on his back. The whole company rose in an uproar of delight, mobbing the new-comer with outstretched hands and cries of greeting. He was borne to a chair ; was made to sit down in state, and, still laughing and talking in the general hubbub, was introduced to my mother and sister.



SWANSTON COTTAGE, THE EARLY HOME OF STEVENSON.  
His father took a lease of the house in 1867.



*From a Portrait, in the possession of Mr.  
Edmund Gosse, taken in California.*

R. L. STEVENSON.

"Thin-legged, thin-chested, slight unspeakably,  
Neat-footed and weak-fingered; in his face—  
Lean, large-boned, curved of beak, and touched with race,  
Bold-lipped, rich-tinted, mutable as the sea,  
The brown eyes radiant with vivacity—  
There shines a brilliant and romantic grace,  
A spirit intense and rare, with trace on trace  
Of passion and impudence and energy."

—W. E. HENLEY, "In Hospital."

From *Poems*. By William Ernest Henley.  
(Nutt.)



“ My cousin, Mr. Stevenson,” said Bob, and there ensued a grave inclination of heads, while I wriggled on my chair very much overcome, and shyly stole peeps at the stranger. He was tall, straight and well formed, with a fine ruddy complexion, clustering light-brown hair, a small tawny moustache and extraordinarily brilliant brown eyes. But these details convey nothing of the peculiar sense of power that seemed to radiate from him—of a peculiar intensity of character that while not exactly dominating had in its quality something infinitely more subtle and winning ; and he was, besides, so gay, so sparkling, so easily the master in all exchange of talk and raillery, that I gazed at him in spellbound admiration.

How incredible it would have seemed to me then had some prophetic voice told me that this stranger’s life and mine were to run together for nineteen years to come ; that I was destined to become his stepson, his comrade, the sharer of all his wanderings ; that we were to write books together ; that we were to sail the far-off seas ; that we were to hew a home out of the tropic wilderness ; and that at the end, while the world mourned, I was to lay his body at rest on a mountain peak in Oceana.

## THE GENIUS OF ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

By Y. Y.

WERE Genius proved not to exist, we would fain invent it, if only to account for the unaccountable graces and capricious defects of the author of *Prince Otto*. In an age which had the usage and the right of conferring literary titles, he would surely have passed as "the Ingenious Mr. Stevenson," and deeply as he is tinctured with the *fin de siècle*, I somehow cannot but picture him among those Oxford Academics of the seventeenth century, *litterati*, humanists, and omniscientists, who crystallised into the Royal Society. Most of them had as little affinity as he to the modern scientific mind; intellectual aristocrats, they preserved the dignity of a stately dilettantism in their most trivial as in their gravest speculations, whether measuring the orbs of space, or hunting Echo in back gardens, or projecting the Cyclopean cesspool at New College, so vast that it should never need emptying till the end of time. How thirsty their curiosity, how exigent their demands at the Oracle of Nature, how versatile their

lucubrations! Yet had they little of the utilitarian philanthropy of their grandsons. Nay, not even for its own sake did they pursue knowledge, but rather as a mental luxury, a noble diversion and exercise for the mind of the "gentleman scholar and philosopher," such as were tennis, bowls, and the high horse for his body. It needed a soul as coarse as Swift's to flout their complacent toils, for if by the way these Olympians divagate into triviality, extravagance, and paradox, they are never ridiculous; their very absurdities we welcome as gracious condescension, for each wayward, futile, pompous page is glorified by a nimbus of exquisite amenity and impregnable self-respect.

Stevenson's work is to me a fascinating problem; I fall back on this comparison, far-fetched, perhaps, yet not wholly infructuous. It may have been suggested by his singular power of reproducing the diction of more eloquent days, but the parallel lies much deeper down. In those happy times Science was not yet divorced from Letters; the profoundest knowledge disdained not the embellishment of Style, which in turn lent its dignity to trifles. The ingenious mind could flit securely from grave to gay, from majestic to minute, for all inconsistency of matter was harmonised by a suave regularity of manner;

what to us would be but picturesque disorder it shrank from with the embarrassment of literary nakedness. This same scholarly instinct has, by I know not what channel, passed to Stevenson—the same fastidious nicety, the same unfailing charm of expression. As an essayist or a story-teller, who more versatile, more erratic than he, eluding our criticism as he glides from tragedy to farce, from mirth to meditation, like some storm-bird diving to the depths and anon skimming airily on the surface? Are then his works a mere dazzling kaleidoscope, and he after all but *Arlequin Auteur*? By no means; for what writer is more easy to single out even from his imitators? His work is indeed of a rare and peculiar unity; the same unmistakable personality pervades every page; and in his style we find the secret of this harmony. It may vary sometimes in character according to the exigencies of the subject, but never at all in its one persistent feature—its excellence, or (to use a bad word in a good sense) its superiority. Superior—that is, on a higher plane, of a finer quality than the language which does the everyday business of busy men. Superior—that is, aristocratically exclusive; and just as the ancient tongues which were the secret of priests and nobles were distrusted by the slaves, so nowadays superiority of style is an affront to mediocrity.

You may call it affected ; what you mean by affected depends on how much you know of the practice of the art. For myself I shall not readily believe that any beautiful yet concise expression of original consecutive thought was ever written *currente calamo*. With all the stimulus of listening senates or a breathless congregation, the orator can hardly rise to the unaffected nonchalance with which he is wont to pass the time o' day ; how much less the author in his silent study. If affectation means sentimental insincerity, then is it nothing to our purpose ; I have before now been asked to hand the butter with all the affectations of Della Crusca. If it means only artifice, the charge is a compliment. Mr. Stevenson's style is thoroughly artificial, because the work of a thorough artifex, as indeed is Rembrandt's painting. But the artifice lies not in a knack of fine periods, but in the self-control, the self-repression, the self-respect which keeps watch against slovenliness and vulgarity ; his page is illuminated not so much by unvarying brilliance as by unvarying determination to express himself strongly and sweetly. Too ready an eye for the ridiculous bars my claim to judge on so delicate a point of taste, but fairer critics have owned that sometimes he refines overmuch, and allows the sense to drift with the words. It may be so, but

what of that ? there is good store of bread to his oceans of sack. It is not here my purpose to analyse his art, but rather to point out how little it has of the modern air. Take two other prose-artists of our time, Ruskin and Matthew Arnold : each in his way is entirely modern ; they simply took up our English such as they found it, perfecting it to their needs. Stevenson goes back not merely, as the critics fancy, to Sterne, but behind the Revolution to a period when scholars wrote for scholars and dreaded a solecism as a stain upon their honour, when the sonorous compliment and gracious urbanity of the cedar parlour were not cast aside on entering the library, when the reader was still " gentle " enough to relish the assiduous court and subtle flattery of a finely elaborated style. That he alone should have adopted this felicitous model I attribute to the accident of his birthplace. So long as Lowland Scotch survives, so long must English, as the aristocratic, the learned, the literary language, attract with the charm of Plato's Attic or Petrarch's Tuscan, and a Scotch student will seek out the purest English exemplars with a singleness of eye by us unattainable.

But the parallel is even stronger as regards his dilettantism, the other note in his attractive personality. At first you mistake it for Voltairian



*diablerie*, then for Neo-Gallic heartlessness, then for agnostical weariness of the flesh. Is he ever sincere? does he care for anything or anybody? does he not despise his own puppets and gloat over their miseries? are his books mere sleight of hand, and is the showman sneering at us dull clowns agape on his benches? No, it is all pure dilettantism, and that of the high old English breed. With a certain polished reserve not wholly flattering to his rivals, he stands daintily aloof from the rabble who live by tickling the ears of the Public-Ass. True, he owes it to himself to make no discourteous allusions to the reader's ears, but in a graceful way he allows him to gather that their length has not wholly escaped his notice, nor does the honest fool like him less for his discrimination than for his reticence.

Were authors princes they might all write like this. Without being a prince, Mr. Stevenson somehow succeeds in evading the attitude of the labourer worthy of his hire. He does not profess to cast fine pearls before swine; he means them for gentles and scholars; but if the swine come grunting around, with a laugh he scrambles a few handfuls among them. He pleases just because he claims to write only to please himself and a few kindred spirits—not you or me. His dainties were not dressed for us, but for our betters: we

like them none the less for that ; a few crumbs of the Empress Frederick's bride-cake fell by some chance to my childish maw—I pronounced them excellent. Again, even when most confidential and caressing, he allows no liberties ; he never hobnobs with the reader like Sterne ; when you are beginning to presume on his condescension, suddenly by a careless sarcasm or a courtly phrase he lets you know your place. When your curiosity is whetted by his own vivid interest in some topic, long before you tire of it he tosses it aside for something new. He suffers you to drain no cup to the dregs. You are to understand that he is no professional scribbler, but a lettered gentleman who just allows you a sight of his manuscripts. Granted that in these days such an attitude involves a certain illusion, still the art with which it is maintained is almost perfect. Stevenson alone—or at least most of all—among our finer writers has succeeded in veiling the nexus of contract between author and reader, book-writer and book-buyer, and in its place reviving the courteous, gracious, mutually-complaisant relations now well-nigh forgotten. Hence the humanising, if not precisely elevating, influence of his work. That work he seems to just carelessly leave in our way—not serious work, you understand—merely the pastime of a cultivated,



# CHÂTEAU BEAUFORT.

From a lead pencil drawing made by Robert Louis Stevenson in the neighbourhood of Monastier, France.

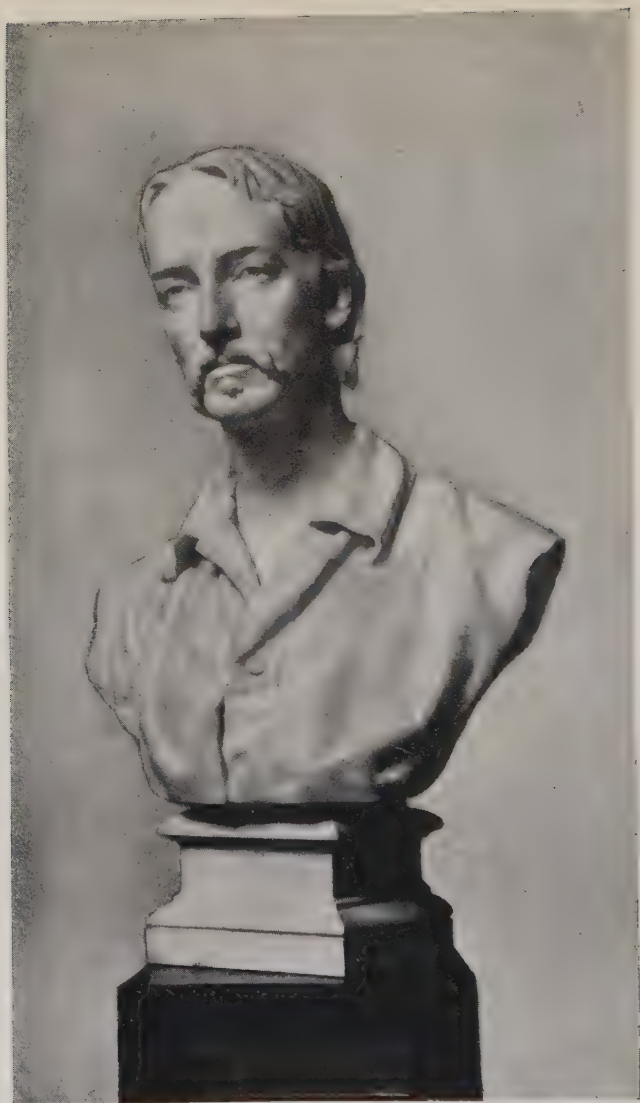
Reproduced by kind permission of Mr. Lloyd Osbourne.



From *Travels with a Donkey*  
(Chatto & Windus).

PONT DE MONTVERT.





*Photo by T. Patrick, Edinburgh.*

BUST OF STEVENSON.

By G. W. Stevenson, R.S.A., in the Scottish Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh.



leisurely mind. What scope, what licence this artful dilettantism gives him ! To criticise almost seems an impertinence. We must not even speculate what he could do if he liked ; enough if we whisper that he has never yet chosen to do his utmost. Like those old experimentalists to whom I have compared him, he wades into deep waters, but no farther than he chooses ; he diverts himself by turns with philosophy, fiction, science, the black art and what not ; but nothing does he pursue in the sordid, technical, specialist spirit. Like them, too, his fancy is caught by chimeras and paradoxes on which he lavishes a world of elaboration. And why not ? a literary aristocrat surely knows how to preserve his dignity while toying with his pen. Superiority—distinction is the note which separates the dilettante from the vulgar trifler, and this distinction is as conspicuous in the audacious incompleteness of some of his work as in the consummate perfection of the rest. Quite apart from style, his attitude to his craft—poorly as I have indicated it—revives a grateful reminiscence of the dilettantism of the Restoration.

If these things be so, to what shall we ascribe it but to pure Genius ? Talent beats smoother the trodden ways ; Genius alone strikes out a new path. Stevenson has already found imitators, but his only rivals are not of his own generation ; they

sleep on their marble shelves beneath quaint classic canopies. Not by copying their eccentricities, but by adapting their liberal spirit and scrupulous manipulation to his modern needs, has he woven round him the spell of a magic personality and renewed our affection for the mother tongue.

It was not this side glimpse, this rambling excursion that I sat down to write. But after all there has been—there will yet be—no lack of criticisms on his several works. Personally, though I retract much that of old I hastily objected, there remains still more than one issue which I would gladly join with Stevenson, nor should I shrink from retorting upon him the playful charge of “protervity” which he once brought against me. A few words as to his influence will be more to the purpose. Some miserable rivals—their names I dare not breathe—may be more popular, but strange to tell, he is popular too. While on the one hand I was surprised at the gravity with which Pattison commended to me Stevenson’s early essays, I have been equally struck by the keen relish of working men, not merely for his stories themselves, but for his manner of narration. After all, music can be enjoyed without understanding it. Upon the brighter spirits of the younger generation his influence is steadily growing. In the case of

several whose development I have watched, the usual phases of enthusiasm lead up through various modern writers to Stevenson. There for the present they pause to enlarge their knowledge of bygone masters, as though conscious that he indicates the high-water mark of contemporary prose. From him they are learning the secret of fastidious and scrupulous diction, of rapid and veracious narrative, of measured design and proportion—graces which have too long lain dormant among us. But after all he marks but a transition, not a culminating point. Nothing he has yet put forth in scope, amplitude, or import challenges the great masterpieces. Yet is his place among the masters. What though his aim be short of the highest, his achievement less than perfect, his example point to no ultimate goal? He stands apart supreme in his own magic circle, compelling his spectres and chanting his spells. If we crowd round it is not to acclaim what is new-fangled and abnormal, but because we rightly prize Rarity, because the One is ever more to us than the Many, knowing as we do that in diversity of types lies the wealth of our literature as of our flora, and that every fresh literary form strikes light from yet another facet of the complex crystal of the human mind. Whether the Magician will ever mellow into the Seer I cannot tell. All that he

has yet done seems but of the nature of exercise and experiment—the capricious fluttering to and fro, the sportive circling of a swift-winged bird that purposes a flight high and far. But Genius knows best its own time to soar, and should time, health, and circumstance bar its rise, should he never pen another line, Robert Louis Stevenson—graceful and melodious singer, accomplished essayist, enthralling story-teller, inspirer of generous boys, cheering comrade of tired men, high priest of the arcana of our glorious tongue—with honour and without reproach will pass over to Treasure Island having deserved well of the Commonwealth of Letters.

1892.

## R. L. S.: AN EARLY PORTRAIT\*

BY EDMUND GOSSE

BUT one was there, the stripling of our crew,  
Cynthius by name, a tall and nimble wight,  
Most indiscreet he was, though kind and true ;  
In strange adventures both by day and night  
This restless being took his sole delight ;  
And oft we quaked to mark his aspect sly,  
As hand on hip, deep in the evening light,  
He taught those townsfolk, with an earnest eye,  
Of things that never were in earth or sea or sky.

Little he loved the quiet Dorian ways,  
To plastic beauty he was somewhat blind ;  
The luscious stillness of those blissful days  
Hung like a cloud upon his cheerful mind,  
Nor pleasure in processions could he find ;  
Nor blew the flute, nor plucked the lyre-string  
tense,  
No fillet round his temples would he bind,  
But lashed the poets for their lack of sense,  
And rated with his tongue the athlete's indolence.

\* From *The Island of the Blest : Firdausi in Exile and other Poems*. By Edmund Gosse (Heinemann).

Yet was he, for all this, the chief delight  
Of racer, bard, artificer and sage,  
Who clustered round their captious favourite,  
And smiled to hear the youthful stoic wage  
Fantastic war against a nobler age ;  
But we, who knew him best, shuddered to see,  
Like some fierce creature in a feeble cage,  
His twinkling eye, grown restive, long to be  
Alert on some new scheme of daring devilry.



## THE FIRST MEETING BETWEEN MEREDITH AND STEVENSON

BY ALICE GORDON

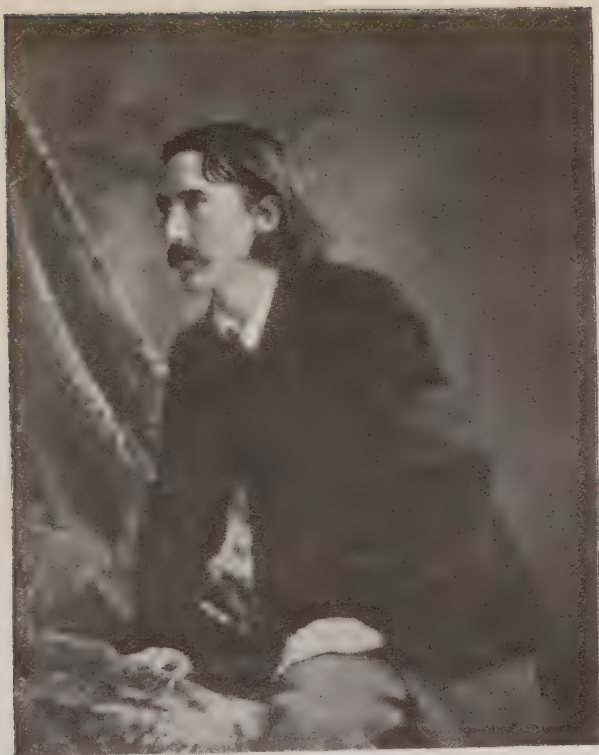
SOME TIME in the seventies Robert Louis Stevenson came with his mother and took up his abode for a summer at the romantic little inn at the foot of Box Hill known as the "Burford Arms." At that time we were living about ten minutes' walk from the little hostel, and among our most honoured and best beloved friends was the sage of Box Hill, George Meredith. A publisher friend wrote to us from London and begged my mother to make the acquaintance of Mr. Louis Stevenson, requesting her if possible to invite him to meet George Meredith. Thus it came to pass that Robert Louis Stevenson, then entirely unknown to fame, would occasionally drop into our garden and sit at the feet of the philosopher and listen with rapt attention and appreciative smiles to his conversation.

I well remember the eager listening face of the student Stevenson, and remember his frank avowal that from henceforth he should enrol

himself "a true blue Meredith man." He was an inspiring listener, and had the art of drawing out the best of Mr. Meredith's brilliant powers of conversation, so that those were halcyon days. Though preferring to listen, Stevenson would speak of Dumas, Hazlitt, Defoe, Congreve, and a host of other writers and creators of fiction with enthusiasm and with that artistic appreciation of their various and differing qualities which is only possible to a workman in the same craft. Everyone knows how Stevenson taught himself to write, in the literary sense of that word, by loving and constant search for the apt word, the artistic and appropriate phrase with which to clothe his thought so that the adjectives and nouns, original and effective though they might be in their application, should yet slip into their right places in the narrative, and seemingly without effort, for simplicity is the soul of a good style.

Stevenson had by this time given up all thought of following his father's profession, and likewise of making a career at the Scottish bar. He had already written and published a good many of his delightful essays; but his name was unknown, and his success far from assured when we knew him in the seventies. I never met him after fame and glory had crowned his efforts.

My sister, I remember, was much interested in



*A Photo taken at Bournemouth  
by W. T. Hawker.*

STEVENSON.

From *Stevenson's Works*, Pentland Edition,  
(Cassells).

608 Bush Street  
San Francisco - Cal.

My dear Colvin, This is a circular letter to tell my estate fully. You have no right to it, being the worst of correspondents; but I wish to efface the impression of my last, so to you it goes.

Any time between 8 and  $1/2$  past nine in the morning, a slender gentleman in an ulster, with a volume buttoned into the breast of it, may be observed leaving no 608 Bush and descending Powell with an active step. The gentleman is R. L. S.; the volume relates to Benjamin Franklin, on whom he meditates one of his charming essays. He descends Powell, crosses Market, and descends in Sixth on the Branch of the original Pine Street Coffee House; no less; I believe he would be capable of going to the original itself, if he could only find it. In the branch he seats himself at a table

FACSIMILE OF LETTER KINDLY LENT BY SIR SIDNEY COLVIN.

Specimen of the close and neat upright style Stevenson always (from about 1876-77) used in writing for the Press, and often (as, for instance, during all his stay in California, August, 1879, to April, 1880) in private correspondence, whether using ruled paper or otherwise.

Stevenson, and even in those early days, expected great things from him in the future. And I well remember her satisfaction, one afternoon, when after he had taken his departure from our circle, and one of us was idly wondering why our friend, the publisher, was so hopeful about young Stevenson's future, George Meredith trumpeted down our feeble utterances by informing us that some day he felt sure we should all be proud to have known him, and prophesied success and fame for him in the future. I was not so discriminating, and remember when *Treasure Island*, *Virginibus Puerisque*, and his other masterpieces appeared, feeling surprised that they should be the work of the silent and, truth to tell, rather dejected-looking youth who had lodged with his mother in our neighbourhood for a short space of time, and whose highest merit in my eyes had been his enthusiastic appreciation of George Meredith's writings and conversation.

Yet I can remember two of Stevenson's sayings that struck me at the time, and have in consequence remained in my memory ever since. One day he wandered in, and with a desolate expression of countenance, remarked that he was having a bad time with his heroine. He said, "She is turning ugly on my hands. It is no use my saying she is beautiful and charming and

fascinating, and that everybody in the book is falling in love with her—it is unconvincing, and I feel the reader won't believe it, and I don't know what to do.' The exact words, I fear, I do not accurately remember, but that, at any rate, was the substance of his observation. And I remember how delighted he was when his confession drew from George Meredith a treatise on heroines in general, and his own in particular. I understand that Stevenson always felt he had not the gift of describing women characters with vitality, and when *Catriona*, his greatest achievement in that difficult task, was published, his keenest anxiety was to know what was thought of her and Barbara Grant by the critics and literary judges in England.

One other day I remember we were talking of our dislike to prigs as heroes in books, and Stevenson said, "An aspirant novelist should always comprehend that if in the first two or three chapters of books readers are convinced that the hero cannot by any possibility do or think anything wrong, or commit even the smallest indiscretion, the authors have given themselves away, and by no possibility can readers be any more interested in the adventures and fortunes of such immaculate but unattractive characters."

My sister who, as I have said before, had a



more perceptive appreciation of the possibilities of his silence than my duller self, gradually acquired possession of all his publications ; and when two years ago she passed away from among us, she left to me as her special bequest her collection of his books, and so as I write at my desk to-day in the bookcase at my side stand all my Stevensons in their first editions, reminding me of those delectable days in Surrey of which I have endeavoured to give a little account in this short article.

1895.

## STEVENSON AND THE JUVENILE DRAMA

BY ST. JOHN ADCOCK

IN *Memories and Portraits* Stevenson opens his essay on "A Penny Plain and Twopence Coloured" with—"These words will be familiar to all students of Skelt's Juvenile Drama. That national monument, after having changed its name to Park's, to Webb's, to Redington's, and last of all to Pollock's, has now become for the most part a memory." He goes on to give a "roll-call of stirring names" of dramas of theirs that he possessed in his childhood—of those sheets of characters, scenes and "side-wings" that you pasted on card and then cut out in readiness for performances on your mimic stage, having first coloured them according to your fancy, if you had not bought them coloured.

The shop still stands, I believe, at the corner of Antigua Street, Edinburgh, where, as he tells us, Stevenson used to loiter, feasting his eyes on a theatre in working order in the window and on the plates of characters displayed, "one, we shall say, pistol in hand, or drawing to his ear the

cloth-yard arrow." But this was only a retail establishment ; this was not the abiding-place of the masterly artists who created and manufactured those glamorous things. Stevenson knew that and knew also where the makers of them lived, for their names and addresses were blazoned on their printed works, and when he visited London he found his way, drawn by glowing memories of his past, to the shop in which one such maker still lived and laboured and had his being.

" A word of moral," he writes at the end of the essay, after discussing the fascinations of several of the plays ; " it appears that B. Pollock, late J. Redington, No. 73, Hoxton Street, not only publishes twenty-three of those old stage favourites, but owns the necessary plates and displays a modest readiness to issue other thirty-three. If you love art, folly or the bright eyes of children, speed to Pollock's, or to Clarke's of Garrick Street. In Pollock's list of publicanda I perceive a pair of my ancient aspirations : *Wreck Ashore* and *Sixteen-String Jack* ; and I cherish the belief that when these shall see once more the light of day, B. Pollock will remember this apologist. But, indeed, I have a dream at times that is not all a dream. I seem to myself to wander in a ghostly street—E.W., I think, the postal district—close below the fool's-cap of

St. Paul's, and yet within easy hearing of the echo of the Abbey bridge. There in a dim shop, low in the roof and smelling strong of glue and foot-lights, I find myself in quaking treaty with great Skelt himself, the aboriginal, all dusty from the tomb. I buy, with what a choking heart—I buy them all, all but the pantomimes ; I pay my mental money and go forth ; and lo ! the packets are dust."

Before I first read "A Penny Plain and Twopence Coloured"—before it was written—I was a devotee at the same shrine ; I too found delight in the works of Skelt, Redington and other such old masters. I did not purchase those works at the fountain-head, but at a queer, snug, miscellaneous overcrowded little retail shop in a North London street. A dark shop, when you got inside, by reason of the lowness of the ceiling and the congested state of the window ; but this very darkness added to the charm and mystery of it. Stevenson says the shop he patronised in Edinburgh "was dark and smelt of Bibles." My shop had a more complex and wonderful odour, an atmosphere compounded of the scent of pear-drops and acid-drops, of paraffin oil and firewood, of fresh and stale newspapers, mitigated by a cool whiff from the ice-cream bucket, the whole blending to a stuffy, astringent sweetness the like

of which I have never encountered elsewhere in all my wanderings. It remains for me inevitably associated with the buying of such unforgettable plays as *The Miller and His Men*, *Richard I*, *Oliver Twist*, *Aladdin*, *The Smuggler*, and others that are or are not on Stevenson's list; and I have trifled with a fantasy that if that shop remains and I were to step into its odorous gloom to-day, I could no sooner inhale its incommunicable pungencies than my maturity would fall from me as by magic, and I should be young enough again and happy enough to lean on its dwarf counter excitedly negotiating, as I used to, for the possession of *Robin Hood*, *Jack Sheppard* or other of those primitive dramas that were not made for men and only reveal their secret splendours to the heart and imagination of a boy.

So when a loyal Stevensonian came down from beyond the Tweed the other day and lured me to accompany him on a pilgrimage to the true home of the Penny Plain and Twopence Coloured I was more than willing to go. Hoxton is not superficially the sort of district you would expect the best of things to come from; you would not guess at a glance that it was or ever had been a reservoir of rich romance which had been piped from it to the small people of innumerable homes all up and down the kingdom. There is nothing

dazzling, nothing in the least degree promising in the appearance of Hoxton Street itself—a long, rather dingy, certainly plain and not coloured thoroughfare just behind Dalston Junction station. It is so far from St. Paul's and the Abbey bridge that either Stevenson's recollection failed him or his description is a composite picture ; maybe he called on Clarke also, and even on the great Skelt, and in reminiscence made one of the three. Yet as you progress up Hoxton Street, possibly as a consequence of your expectations, you are conscious of a sort of old-world sleepiness about it of which dreams may come. There is a factory or so on one side, and a big, unlovely school building, replacing, no doubt, a stretch of motley, snoozing, red-tiled shops and houses that were coeval with those that still survive across the road. And presently, when you are opposite the school, you get the thrill you had waited for, at sight of a small-windowed, ancient shop on which is inscribed the No. 73, the name of B. Pollock, and an intimation that he prints and publishes the *Juvenile Drama*.

You cross over and gaze in at the window, and behold a toy theatre displayed and sheets of characters from selected dramas, or vividly painted presentments of single characters as played by once distinguished actors, each striking





*National Portrait Gallery.*

R. L. STEVENSON.

A sketch, painted in one sitting, by Sir W. B. Richmond, R.A.



"A  
 PENNY PLAIN  
 AND TWOPENCE  
 COLOURED."

Mr. G. Bennett  
 as the King  
 in *Hamlet*,  
 and Mr. Marston  
 as Macduff.

Two of the plates  
 published by  
 B. Pollock,  
 73, Hoxton Street,  
 Hoxton,  
 whose services to the  
 Juvenile Drama  
 are celebrated in  
 Stevenson's *Memories  
 and Portraits*.



very similar attitudes in a great variety of parts. Then you go in through a narrow shop-door, under a roof so low that you could put your hand up and almost touch it, and here you feel at once that this is no commonplace emporium but veritably a little shop in fairyland. Facing you is a small door leading into a tiny back room ; on your right is a glass cupboard containing dolls and orthodox toys ; and on your left, with a stained, worn, doll's-house kind of desk perched on the inner end of it, is a squat, short counter, behind which, ranged on shelves, are neatly labelled boxes, the avowed repositories of the pictorial sheets that were dear to youthful play-producers when Stevenson was young, and long before that. Everything is neat and orderly—not as it was in my little North London shop—and here there is no distinctive atmosphere. It is as Stevenson found it, “a dim shop, low in the roof,” but at the moment, anyhow, it has not the smell of glue and footlights that he ascribes to it.

As we stand and gaze the small inner door opens, and there emerges quietly a gracious, elderly man who has a detached, subdued, earlier-world aspect which somehow suggests to you that you may be only dreaming him. He slips round by the worn desk, places himself behind the counter, and in

answer to your first question diffidently acknowledges that he is the real, original B. Pollock in the flesh. Yes, he will tell you in the course of friendly talk, he remembers Stevenson visiting him, and can recall him clearly as a frail, delicate-looking man, and rather tall.

“ You see those hooks in the ceiling, just above where you are standing,” says he; “ well, in those days I used to keep some of my stages ready made and hanging from those hooks, and when Mr. Stevenson came in, not noticing, he caught his head against them and nearly jerked his hat off. He asked me all manner of questions, wanted to look at all the plays and had them out on the counter here, going over them and talking and laughing gently about them. A stout gentleman was with him—a doctor, I think; I don’t know who he was. I showed him the copper plates I print from, and I remember the one I was using just then was of a set of side-wings for *Beauty and the Beast*. I don’t print direct from the plates, but transfer the designs to the stone and print from that, so the copper plates never get worn, and I still use the same ones as were used from the beginning. I do the printing myself, and colour them myself by hand, my daughter who lives with me helping in the work. No, the business is not what it was. Years ago

the shop would be crowded Saturday nights with boys buying the plays, or stages, or the big prints of single characters that they could take home and colour themselves. But tastes change, and I think it is only the better class of people who buy them now, and mostly my customers are the retail shops that send in orders from all parts of the country."

The cinemas may have made a difference, or boys may be more sophisticated than they were ; I don't know. I inquired about Skelt, that once potent rival of B. Pollock, whose name so charmed Stevenson as indicating things stagey and piratic that he coined the word " Skeltery " to designate those qualities. But it seems that Skelt has gone the way of all flesh, his descendants are otherwise occupied, and Mr. Pollock believes he is the sole survivor of that group of makers whose names R. L. S. joyed to remember, the only actual begetter in London now of the Juvenile Drama. His shop may be anything up to two centuries old ; the business was founded there eighty-five years ago by J. Redington, and Mr. Pollock became his son-in-law, was helping him in it when he was twenty, and succeeded him after his death.

We stood for a while where Stevenson had stood, chatting with B. Pollock over his counter



as Stevenson had done ; and he mentioned that many other pilgrims had been sent there before us by that passage in *Memories and Portraits*, including G. K. Chesterton, now the possessor of a theatre and I don't know how many plays ; George R. Sims ; Thomas Burke ; and he speaks with pleasure of a day when Miss Shackleton arrived from *John o' London's Weekly* and he stood to her for his portrait. He was uncertain of the year of Stevenson's visit—it was many years ago ; but I see in his entertaining *Forty Years in My Bookshop*, Mr. Walter Spencer says Stevenson called on him in Oxford Street in 1885, “ during a break in a journey from Edinburgh to Bournemouth,” and it is possible he wandered into Hoxton Street in the same interval, for *Memories and Portraits* appeared two years later.

Having duly inspected one of the copper plates and invaded the tiny back room to see the hand-press on which for nearly half a century Mr. Pollock has done an unimaginable quantity of printing, we returned into the shop and, for old time's sake, I bought a complete set of *Oliver Twist* with a book of the words. “ They are not twopence coloured now,” remarked Mr. Pollock ; and it seemed sad that Stevenson's title should thus be set at naught ; “ prices have all



gone up, you know, and the coloured sheets are now threepence each." On the wall beside us hung a framed print of a once noted actor in character, not merely painted, but with shining tinsel pasted deftly over his sword, jewels and armour, so that they glistened like reality ; but this was unobtainable.

"That," said Mr. Pollock, taking it down that we might the easier examine it, "was done by a very old customer of ours. He was a gentleman on the Stock Exchange, and he did this when he was eighty and presented it to me, and I would not sell it for anything. Look at it—how beautiful it is ! We sell the tinsel, you see, then it has to be cut out and carefully pasted over armour and jewellery to make them gleam like real things, and it is not easy to shape and fit the tinsel so exactly—to do it properly like this is a work of real art."

He restored the picture reverently to its nail, and I had a passing vision of that old, old man, born again in spirit and so, at last, escaping from the costly vanities of the money market to the heaven he left behind him when he grew foolish and fancied he could pay his way into a better one if he had more than a penny. And it was good to feel that though the magic air of my North London shop was not in this one, to make

a boy again of me, the place evidently had its own subtle atmosphere, potent enough to give his boyhood back to that aged stockbroker when he revisited it ; and you may depend it had something of the same effect on Tusitala himself, at least so long as he lingered here within its influence.

TO TUSITALA IN VAILIMA  
(ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON)\*

BY EDMUND GOSSE

I

CLEAREST voice in Britain's chorus,  
Tusitala !

Years ago, years four-and-twenty,  
Grey the cloud land drifted o'er us,  
When these ears first heard you talking,  
When these eyes first saw you smiling.  
Years of famine, years of plenty,  
Years of beckoning and beguiling,  
Years of yielding, shifting, baulking—  
When the good ship *Clansman* bore us  
Round the spits of Tobermory,  
Glens of Voulin like a vision,  
Craggs of Knoidart, huge and hoary—  
We had laughed in light derision,  
Had they told us, told the daring

Tusitala,

What the year's pale hands were bearing—  
Years in stately, dim division.

\* Dedication of "In Russet and Silver": from *The Collected Poems of Edmund Gosse* (Heinemann).

## II

Now the skies are pure above you,  
Tusitala !  
Feather'd trees bow down to love you ;  
Perfum'd winds from shining waters  
Stir the sanguine-leav'd hibiscus  
That your kingdom's dusk-ey'd daughters  
Weave about their shining tresses ;  
Dew-fed guavas drop their viscous  
Honey at the sun's caresses  
Where eternal summer blesses  
Your ethereal musky highlands—  
Ah ! but does your heart remember,  
Tusitala,  
Westward in our Scotch September,  
Blue against the pale sun's ember—  
That low rim of faint long islands,  
Barren granite-snouted nesses,  
Plunging in the dull'd Atlantic,  
Where beyond Tiree one guesses,  
At the full tide, loud and frantic ?

## III

By strange pathways God hath brought you,  
Tusitala,  
In strange webs of fortune caught you,  
Led you by strange moods and measures  
To this paradise of pleasures !



From *Stevenson's Works*,  
Pentland Edition (Cassells).

R. L. STEVENSON.

From a Painting by John S. Sargent, R.A.

"Sargent was down again, and painted a portrait of me walking about in my own dining-room ; in my own velveteen jacket, and twisting as I go my own moustache." (Skerryvore, Bournemouth, 1885.) — *The Letters of R. L. Stevenson*. Edited by Sir Sidney Colvin. (Methuen and Heinemann.)

Dear S. C.,

and damn your eyes  
for not coming!

I have received Estlin May,  
Spencer Walpole and Gleis from  
the public's hire. Pray tell me  
what you can do - above all  
about the despatches - by  
telegram. Longman has handsomely  
offered £10; and your silence  
puts me to a stand.

Come, as soon as you can,  
but mean.

R. L. S.

FACSIMILE OF LETTER KINDLY LENT BY SIR SIDNEY COLVIN.

Specimen of the loose, sloping hand (a good deal resembling his wife's) which Stevenson adopted after his return from California, and used generally in private correspondence during the Davos-Hyères-Bournemouth and Saranac periods (1881-87). From 1892 (having had threatenings of writer's cramp) he often dictated both letters and literary compositions to his stepdaughter, Mrs. Strong.



And the bodyguard that sought you  
 To conduct you home to glory—  
 Dark the oriflammes they carried,  
 In the mist their cohort tarried—  
 They were Languor, Pain, and Sorrow,  
Tusitala !

Scarcely we endured their story  
 Trailing on from morn to morrow,  
 Such the devious road they led you,  
 Such the error, such the vastness,  
 Such the cloud that overspread you,  
 Under exile bow'd and banish'd,  
 Lost, like Moses in the fastness,  
 Till we almost deem'd you vanish'd.

#### IV

Vanish'd ? ay, that's still the trouble,  
Tusitala !

Though your tropic isle rejoices,  
 'Tis to us an isle of Voices  
 Hollow like the elfin double  
 Cry of disembodied echoes,  
 Or an owlet's wicked laughter,  
 Or the cold and hornèd gecko's  
 Croaking from a ruined rafter—  
 Voices these of things existing,  
 Yet incessantly resisting  
 Eyes and hands that follow after ;

You are circled, as by magic,  
In a surf-built palmy bubble,  
Tusitala ;

Fate hath chosen, but the choice is  
Half delectable, half tragic,  
For we hear you speak, like Moses,  
And we greet you back, enchanted,  
But reply's no sooner granted,  
Than the rifted cloud-land closes.

*September, 1894.*

## THE APPRENTICESHIP OF ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

BY S. R. CROCKETT

THERE is a faithful Scot on a hill-side in Samoa, much given to boasting in print of his high-set, far-shining palace, his nineteen waterfalls, and the blue sky over all. This is public ; but when a far-travelled, much-enduring letter, at once broad and slim, overtops the brae and bears down upon us, having for trade-mark the crow-toe calligraphy which at the distance of a long sea mile proclaims our Louis Stevenson, what a different tale it is we hear. Instead of such public boastings, as of a night-returning boy who whistles loud to keep his courage up, we have only " O why left I my hame," with variations. " Do you know," we read, " that the dearest burn to me in the world is that which drums and pours in cunning wimples in that glen of yours behind Glencorse old kirk." " O that I were the lad I once was, sitting under old Torrance, that old shepherd of let-well-alone, and watching with awe the waving of the old black gloves over the Bible

—the preacher's white finger-ends meanwhile aspiring through. Man, I would even be willing to sit under *you*, a sore declension truly, just to be *there* ! ”

Wherever he may be, under south English “ roof of pine,” or in Samoa on the back of the broad Pacific, Robert Louis Stevenson kindles like a flash to a memory of the country home of his boyhood. The eternal child in him rises to it like a trout at a fly.

“ O man, to listen to ye, is like a cast-back into my youth ! And to think that you can step to your front door and look out on Rullion Green and Swanston, Glencorse and Carnethy—and yet never think it worth your while ! ”

There is “ a nameless trickle that springs in the green side of Allermuir, and is fed from Halker-side with a perennial teacupful ”—a streamlet with a brief race and no history, save that by its side a dreamy, loose-jointed stripling used to come and sit, and most industriously make bad verses. Beneath lies the Lothian plain dotted with villages, blue smoke blowing westward over it, while to seaward is the pyramid of Berwick Law with the Bass a-tiptoe looking over its shoulder. Beneath there is a fine tangle of moss and heather, peat-hag and bracken, in which to play at hunted Covenanter. It was just here that

Robert Louis Stevenson found his articulate soul. The spring is still there, the trickle of water, the one inconsiderable but indubitable pool, overhung by the smallest stone that was ever called a "rock." But for literary purposes 'tis an excellent rock. More excellent was it when our John-a-Dreams lay hid in the fastnesses and made a world for himself—or many worlds rather—some of which he has since annexed to English literature. Long and lazy, frank with himself and with his intimates, sulky with those unworthy to be admitted into his little world of imaginings, it is small wonder if many, who then saw the moody boy, to this day retain the impression that he "had a want." Memory of Stevenson the Younger is mostly dead about the Pentlands. But some will still vaguely remember him as a lad "that lay aboot the dyke-backs wi' a buik"—this with the happiest touch of scorn for the "fecklessness" of such a performance. "He wasna thocht verra muckle o'." "It wasna jaloosed (suspected) that he wad ever come to muckle." These are the sole impressions which the inquirer can now gather hereabouts of the boyhood of the romancer. In these latter unfavourable impressions, there is definite trace of the vigorously expressed paternal disappointment when one of the "strenuous family which had

dusted from its hands the sand of granite " took to lying about dyke-backs and getting its fingers inky.

His literary works are totally unknown about Swanston and the Pentland edge. Only one old wife has an idea that there was a " laddie Stevenson " who had written " something about the Covenanters," a creditable performance which was hardly to be expected of one who " favoured the Estaiblished Kirk." She is of opinion that she saw the identical pamphlet not so long ago. Here it is found after strict search, carefully preserved between the leds (boards) of the Bible—its green cover re-covered with an overcoat of brown paper which announces itself as having formed part of a tea-bag sold twenty-five years ago by a grocer of Penicuik. The " something about the Covenanters " resolves itself into *The Pentland Rising, a Page of History*, 1666. (Edinburgh : Andrew Elliot, 17, Princes Street, 1866.) In the centre of the bold apple-green within the teabag cover, is the motto :

" A cloud of witnesses ly here,  
Who for Christ's interest did appear."  
—*Inscription on Battlefield at Rullion Green.*

The little pamphlet of twenty-two pages, the earliest and rarest of Robert Louis Stevenson's



works, is very accurately dated as having been completed at "Edinburgh, 28th Nov., 1866," that, is, just a fortnight after he had completed his sixteenth year, and on the anniversary of the bi-centenary of the battle of Rullion Green. We may take it that the little pamphlet was written at Swanston with his eye on the immediate scene of the events. Childish enough in its writing, it is full of interest; and, though crowded with references to the authorities (Wodrow, *Cloud of Witnesses*; Naphthali, *Faithful Contendings*; Kirkton, *Outed Minister*, and even Defoe's *History of the Church*), for directness of impression and clearness of narrative it might have been written by a simple-minded eye-witness. There is no doubt on which side are the young author's sympathies. He is frankly partisan, as indeed every Scot must be by nature. The "persecutors" are all "bloody-minded" and "cruel." In this strenuous advocacy we see the lad who had already acted it all out on the green Pentland side. "I skulked in my favourite wilderness like a Cameronian of the Killing Time, and John Todd was my Claverhouse, and his dogs my questing dragoons." This is the true ineradicable way of learning history. The man who has thus learned his history may assume in later life a superficial calmness of criticism, he may read apologies for

Clavers and Lag with resolve to rise superior to prejudice ; he may even write them ; but he will ever be Covenanter down at the heart of him, so that he cannot look upon a rusty old flag hung among bones and battle-axes in a museum without the water rising in his eyes, brimming to the overflow, and without gripping hands till the nails sink into the flesh to keep down something that takes him in the throat.

So it is strange in Stevenson's books, as well as in his conversation, to see his cosmopolitan ease, the calm light in the eyes which look out at once smiling and observant upon the wide world, in a moment exploded by a flash of suggestion from the bleak Nor'land where the whaups are crying about the Martyrs' graves.

Does one but mention the Grassmarket to him, and it is no more Louis Stevenson of Samoa and the World that listens, but the lad who at sixteen wrote of young Hugh McKail who was martyred there in the flower of his youth ; it is no intellectual Gallio, but one who, though he might have marched with the clans from the braes of Mar because the skirl of pipes makes him mad, yet longs like Peden to be " wi' Ritchie " in the last stand which the preacher-soldier Richard Cameron made on Airds Moss. Artistic feeling, the society of many men, the influences of spheres



*Photo by T. Patrick, Edinburgh.*

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.



Rob and Ben

CI

THE PIRATE and the APOTHECARY.

Scene the First.

# ROB AND BEN.

At Davos, in 1880-1882, Stevenson and his stepson, Lloyd Osbourne (who was then 13) set up a toy printing press; they wrote burlesque stories between them, R. L. S. illustrating and Lloyd Osbourne printing them.

From *Stevenson's Works*, Pentland Edition (Cassells).

where the Covenanters are only spoken of as ignorant rebels, have not changed the essential Covenanting base of Stevenson's character. Carlyle remained Annandale Dissenter till the day of his death. Whatever the rough insolence of his Annandale speech, Carlyle always acted as if in the presence of his mother's God. And does but a flag flutter, or a waft of smoke bring back the peat fires, and Robert Stevenson is back again in the much-enduring land, whose glories are forlorn hopes and whose victories the unconquerable despair of hopeless men fighting with their backs to the wall. This is that Pentland lad who wrote of the Covenant men in words which he may wish now to alter, but whose spirit is still his own—"Perhaps the storm of harsh and fiercely jubilant noises, the clanging of trumpets, the rattling of drums, and the hootings and jeerings of an unfeeling mob, which were the last sounds they heard on earth, might, when the mortal fight was over, when the river of death was passed, add tenfold peacefulness to the shores which they had reached." A page farther on we have a picture which gives us a glimpse of the eerie and other-world element in the lad. "Kirkton the historian and popular tradition tell us," he says, "of a flame that would often rise from the grave, in a moss near Carnwath, of some of these

poor rebels ; of how it crept along the ground, of how it covered the house of the murderer, and scared him with its lurid glare."

The manner in which this is told leaves us little room to doubt that the picture of the flame-wrapped house and the persecutor within, clammy terror sitting in the inwards of his soul, was one which long haunted the imagination of the boy. The idea is one which came out of the same basket as the spiritual terrors of Dr. Jekyll, and of Gordon Darnaway in *The Merry Men*, and of Uncle Ebenezer alone in the great house of the Shaws. It shows that Stevenson, even as a schoolboy, was continually wandering round the confines of the other world, and companying with the men of a time to whom such things as these were the sternest of realities—the days, indeed, when in the words of the famous rhyme :

“ Hab Dab and Dawvid Dinn,  
Dang the De'il ower Dabson's Linn.”

Stevenson never overwhelms his incident with landscape description like the school of William Black, in whose books the incident has often to dodge the pages of solid description in order to show its face at all. Nor, like some, does he go forward, habitually blind to outward nature, and only deign specially to look at a scene when he



has occasion to describe it ; he observes, as one might say, *currently*, often without being conscious of doing so. We seldom find him sitting down to it, as it were, and saying, “ Lo, I will describe a landscape.” Yet even at sixteen, the boy who in the fullness of his powers was to write the marvellous description of the Merry Men of Aros, had begun to learn his trade. It is instructive to compare the following two passages :—“ On such a night, he peers upon a world of blackness where the waters wheel and boil, where the waves joust together with the noise of an explosion, and the foam towers and vanishes in the twinkling of an eye. Never before had I seen the Merry Men thus violent. The fury, height, and transiency of their spoutings was a thing to be seen and not recounted. High over our heads on the cliff rose their white columns in the darkness ; and the same instant, like phantoms, they were gone. Sometimes three at a time would thus aspire and vanish ; sometimes a gust took them, and the spray would fall about us, heavy as a wave. Yet the spectacle was rather maddening in its levity than impressive by its force. Thought was beaten down by the confounding uproar ; a gleeful vacancy possessed the brains of men, a state akin to madness ; and I found myself at times following the dance of the Merry

Men as it were a tune upon a jigging instrument."

Here the magic is due not to any very remarkable photographic accuracy of description, certainly not to the cataloguing which sometimes passes for realism, but to an author whose personality is never hid from us, and who is conscious of his power to charm us, making himself part of what he describes, and throwing the limelight of his imagination upon the mad dance of the waters. This description is as successful as Barrie's island in the floods in the *Little Minister* and the Stonehenge scene in Thomas Hardy's *Tess* are the reverse, because Stevenson has not attempted to take more of possibility out of his characters than he had put into their natures. In *The Merry Men*, circumstance and personality go together and mutually persuade us of the truth of each.

If a description written by Stevenson, the apprentice, be taken to compare with this masterpiece of the complete craftsman, the result is very instructive.

"The sun, going down behind the Pentlands, cast golden lights and blue shadows on their snow-clad summits, slanted obliquely into the rich plain before them, bathing with rosy splendour the leafless, snow-sprinkled trees, and fading gradually into shadow in the distance. To the

south, too, they beheld a deep-shaded amphitheatre of heather and bracken—the course of the Esk, near Penicuik, winding about at the foot of its gorge—the broad, brown expanse of Maw Moss—and fading into blue indistinctness in the south, the wild heath-clad Peeblesshire hills.”

Clearly, of course, this is the work of a beginner, but it is work done with an eye on the object—carefully done too, for though the effect of the whole be commonplace, it is so because it is easier to describe the Day of Judgment than an ordinary sunset. From Rullion Green every word is true, absolutely and exactly. The sun does still “slant obliquely,” the Moorfoots do curve round to form an amphitheatre, through which the Esk water runs. Maw Moss is still a “broad, brown expanse.” On the whole in *The Pentland Rising* we have a prentice work of no ordinary promise, and one which, written at the age of between fifteen and sixteen, reveals many of the most interesting and remarkable characteristics of a style and personality as unique as any in all English literature.

1893.

## TO PROSPERO AT SAMOA

By Y. Y.

A world away in dreams we roam—  
The tempest howls, the lightnings fall ;  
Slim rainbows span the leaping foam  
That shatters on your fortress wall ;  
Yet forth to shipwreck would we go  
To be the guests of Prospero :

To join your court where glints the blue  
Through frets of lank banana fans—  
Mirandas, but of warmer hue,  
And other, lazier Calibans,  
And beaded Ariel-eyes that glow  
To list the tale of Prospero.

They stoop from sultry southern stars,  
They rise from yonder Peaceful Sea,  
The sprites you bind in mystic bars  
On Fancy's page, your thralls, as we.  
A dream !—we wake, and falling snow  
Hides Treasure Isle and Prospero.

Then flash us tidings of your weal !

Bid Ariel tread the ocean floor,  
And fire-fed dragons, ribbed with steel,

Rush treasure-freighted to our shore  
With tales of mingled mirth and woe,  
The magic scroll of Prospero !

1892.

## STEVENSON'S LETTERS

BY S. R. CROCKETT

OUT of these noble volumes of Stevenson letters\* two things come to me of new, of which the first is the more important. Before and above all else these books (with their appendage the Vailima Correspondence) are the record of as noble a friendship as I know of in letters. And perhaps, as following from this, we have here a Stevenson without shadows. Not even a full statue, but rather a medallion in low relief—as it were the St. Gaudens bust done into printer's ink.

It is difficult to say precisely what one feels, with Mr. Colvin (and long may he be spared) still in the midst of us. And yet I cannot help putting it on record that what impresses me most in these volumes, wherein are so many things lovely and of good report, is the way in which, in order that one friend may shine like a city set on a hill, the other friend consistently retires himself into

\* *Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*. 2 vols. (Methuen). Now included also in the Tusitala Edition of Stevenson's works (Heinemann).





ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON,  
1893.

A pencil drawing made from life by Percy F. S. Spence, at Sydney, N.S.W.  
(Now in the National Portrait Gallery).



From *Stevenson's Works*,  
Pentland Edition (Cassells).

HOUSE AT LAKE SARANAC IN THE ADIRO-  
NACKS, WHERE STEVENSON LIVED FROM  
OCTOBER, 1887, TO APRIL, 1888.



From *Stevenson's Works*,  
Pentland Edition (Cassells).

STEVENSON'S RESIDENCE  
AT VAILIMA, SAMOA.

deepest shade. Yet all the same Mr. Colvin is ever on the spot. You can trace him on every page—emergent only when an explanation must be made, never saying a word too much, obviously in possession of all the facts, but desirous of no reward or fame or glory to himself if only Tusitala continue to shine the first among his peers. Truly there is a love not, perhaps, *surpassing* the love of women, but certainly *passing* it, in that it is different in kind and degree,

Obviously, however, Mr. Colvin often wounded with the faithful wounds of a friend, and sometimes in return he was blessed, and sometimes he was banned. But always the next letter made it all right.

To many outside of his family and familiars Stevenson was always a charming and sometimes a regular correspondent. To myself, with no claim upon him save that of a certain instinctive mutual liking, he wrote with the utmost punctuality every two months from 1888 to the week of his death. It is the irony of fate that about thirty of these letters lie buried somewhere beneath, above, or behind an impenetrable barrier of 25,000 books. In a certain great "flitting" conducted by village workmen these manuscripts disappeared, and have so far eluded all research. But at the next upturning of the Universe, I

doubt not they will come to light and be available for Mr. Colvin's twentieth edition. It was a great grief to me that I had no more to contribute besides those few but precious documents which appear in their places in the second volume of *Letters to Family and Friends*.

Albeit, in spite of every such blank, here is such richness as has not been in any man's correspondence since Horace Walpole's—yet never, like his, acidly-based, never razor-edged, never for all Stevenson's Edinburgh extraction, either west-endy or east-windy. Here in brief are two books, solid, sane, packed with wit and kindliness and filled full of the very height of living.

Not all of Stevenson is here—it seems to me, not even the greater part of Stevenson. Considered from one point of view, there is more of the depths of the real Stevenson in a single chapter of Miss Eve Simpson's *Edinburgh Days*, especially in the chapter entitled "Life at Twenty-five," than in any of these 750 fair pages. But with such a friend as Mr. Colvin this was inevitable. He has carried out that finest of the maxims of amity, "Censure your friend in private, praise him in public!" And, indeed, if ever man deserved to be praised it was Stevenson. So generous was he, so ready to be pleased with

other men's matters, so hard to satisfy with his own, a child among children, a man among men, a king among princes. Yet, all the same, anything of the nature of a ploy stirred him to the shoe holes, down to that last tragic bowl of salad and bottle of old Burgundy on the night before he died. He was a fairy prince and a peasant boy in one, Aladdin with an old lamp under his arm always ready to be rubbed, while outside his window Jack's beanstalk went clambering heavenward a foot every five minutes.

All the same, it gives one a heartache—even those of us who knew him least—to think that no more of those wide sheets closely written and many times folded will ever come to us through the post. And what the want must be to those who knew him longer and better, to Mr. Colvin, Mr. Gosse, Mr. Henley, only they know.

For myself, I am grateful for every word set down here. It is all sweet, and true, and gracious. The heaven seems kinder to the earth while we read, and in the new portrait Tusitala's large dark eyes gleam at us from beneath the penthouse of his brows with a gipsy-like and transitory suggestion.

"The Sprite" someone called him. And it was a true word. For here he had no continuing city. Doubtless, though, he lightens some

Farther Lands with his bright wit, and such ministering spirits as he may cross on his journeying are finding him good company. *Talofa Tusitala*, do not go very far away ! We too would follow you down the " Road of Loving Hearts."

1899.



## TO COUNT GIROLAMO NERLI

*(We are indebted to Mrs. Jeanne Butler, of Westbury-on-Trym, for a copy of the following verses written by Stevenson while sitting to Count Nerli for his portrait. "Count Nerli was a friend of my husband's," writes Mrs. Butler, "and gave him the verses on his return from the island.")*

DID ever mortal man hear tell of sae singular a  
ferlie

As the coming to Apia here of the painter, Mr.  
Nerli.

He cam, and O for a human friend, of a' he was the  
perli ;

The pearl of a' the painter folk was surely Mr.  
Nerli.

He took a thraw to paint mysel', he painted late  
and early,

O, wow, the mony a yawn I've yawned in the  
beard of Mr. Nerli.

Whiles I would sleep, and whiles would wake, and  
whiles was mair than surly,

I wondered sair, as I sat there, fornenst the eyes  
of Nerli :

Oh will he paint me the way I want, as bonny as a  
girlie ?

Or will he paint me an ugly tyke, and be damned  
to Mr. Nerli !

But still, and on, and whichever it is, he is a canty  
kerli—

The Lord protect the back and neck of honest  
Mr. Nerli.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

VAILIMA,  
SAMOA.

# THE WORKS OF ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

BY H. C. BEECHING

## I

THERE are many ways of marking the milestones on the road of life ; and certainly not the worst is by a register of the books which have added to its joy. The present writer was born too late to hail in succession the masterpieces of Dickens or Thackeray, or even of George Eliot—*Daniel Deronda*, which fell in his way hot from the press, ministered no delight—but he came into the world in the very nick of time to enjoy, one by one, and to the full, the delicate fruits of Stevenson's genius. *Treasure Island*, *Prince Otto*, *Kidnapped*, *The Master of Ballantrae*, *Catriona*, glorified the days in which they appeared with the reddest letters in the calendar. Of these, however, it is inadmissible to speak at this time ; for the occasion of the present article\* is the publication of the first four volumes only of the new Pentland Edition of Stevenson's collected

\* 1907. *Works of Stevenson*. Pentland Edition. (Cassells, Chatto; Heinemann, and Longmans).

work ; the first volume opening with the *Inland Voyage*, and the last coming to a close with the *New Arabian Nights*. That is to say, the present issue comprises the journeyman work of the writer, already master of his tools, but still uncertain how best to employ them. And yet the last volume of these preliminary exercises, which contains the short stories of 1877-79, shows unmistakably in what direction the writer will exhibit his strength. I do not understand why the title of *The New Arabian Nights* was extended to *The Pavilion on the Links*, *A Lodging for the Night*, *The Sire de Malétroit's Door*, and *Providence and the Guitar*. It surely can belong only to the *Suicide Club* and the *Rajah's Diamond*. The other tales have no link with these, nor are they in the same *genre*. And the blunder is unfortunate, as the greater stories are thus named of the less. The modernisation of the Caliph Haroun al-Raschid was an adventurous idea, brilliantly carried out ; it pushes one step further, into capital farce, Tennyson's identification of King Arthur with a certain English gentleman of stateliest port ; but the stories themselves, a mixture of melodrama and burlesque, have not the remotest air of reality, and hardly bear a second reading. Moreover the *Suicide Club* contains one picture, that of Mr. Malthus, of such a nightmare horribleness that it



*Photo by H. Waller Barnett.*

STEVENSON.

# GARDEN DAYS







The moon  
has a  
face like  
the  
clock in  
the hall;





From *Catriona*  
(Cassells).

"SHE DROPPED ME ONE  
OF HER CURTSEYS."

would not have passed the censor in any community of Utopia. There must have been a strain of brutality somewhere in Stevenson's fine nature, which cropped out once and again, even in the later books. *The Body Snatcher*, published (save the mark) as a Christmas story, was the only tale in which this strain predominated ; but the character of old Pew in *Treasure Island*, and Mr. Hyde, the *alter ego* of Dr. Jekyll, are imaginations that ought not to have been imagined. Plato, we may be sure, would have invited their creator to leave his commonwealth at the earliest possible moment. However, this strain in the nature, if I may put it so, was for the most part kept well in check by more gentle and humane qualities. There are strong, even stark, characters enough in other tales—Northmour, for example, in the *Pavilion on the Links* ; and the fraudulent banker Huddleston in the same story is, as much as Mr. Malthus, a study in the psychology of fear ; but these characters are well within the limits of literary decency. The *Pavilion on the Links*, indeed, has all the qualities which combine to make the true Stevenson. There is the landscape, so well drawn, and so completely in key with the beauty or horror of the situation ; there is the single vivid incident, etched in with acid, sharp and unforgettable—in this case, the noise

of the wet finger on the window-pane without and the voice that shouted "Traditore" through the shutters; there is the wholesomeness of the "sentiment" in the Aristotelian sense of the word; and there is the perfection of the phrasing. The romantic tale of the strange courtship that went on in the two hours before dawn inside the "Sire de Malétroit's Door" is singularly beautiful, and unlike anything else in fiction. And then there are those charming French "artists" in *Providence and the Guitar*—studied, it would seem, from a broken-down actor and his wife, full of sentiment, described in the *Inland Voyage*—who preach that Christian lesson which Stevenson was never tired of inculcating, that the life of a man does not consist in the abundance of things which he possesses. Finally there is *A Lodging for the Night*, with its two scenes in the inn parlour and the Lord of Brisetout's *hôtel*. I do not believe that Villon was, as Stevenson has represented him, a compound of wolf and pig, with some unexplained capacity for making *ballades*, but with no capacity for seeing anything in his chivalrous host for the night but "a very dull old gentleman." The philosophy of revolt against society, which Stevenson has elsewhere expounded, should have saved him from such a lapse of critical imagination. But strike out the name of the

poet, and one can enjoy to the full the vividness of the contrast between the two scenes and the wintry Paris landscape that unites them.

The mention of Villon brings me to speak of the only part of Stevenson's early writing which seems to fail of its mark, and that is the critical work, collected into *Familiar Studies of Men and Books*. Stevenson, in his humble preface, recognises his tendency to depreciate ; a curious fault in an exponent of the philosophy of looking always on the better side. But Stevenson was not built for a critic. His imagination was always at work on the material that came before him for study. What seemed a striking saying summoned up in his mind a vivid picture of the man who would say such a thing, and this became for him the man's true portrait ; but if the saying was really but an *obiter dictum*, not really characteristic, or if by some chance it had been misinterpreted, then the whole character was misread. I do not believe, as I have said, in the character drawn of François Villon. Most Scotsmen fail to see the likeness in the portrait of Burns ; but with that controversy an Englishman had better not intermeddle. But any reader of *Pepys' Diary* can see that Stevenson's " little sensualist in a periwig " is far enough from the truth about that interesting person. It may be worth while to indicate a few



points in which the painter has misrepresented his sitter, because when a great artist paints a portrait we are apt to take the lifelikeness for granted, and also because Stevenson believed he had done Pepys something more than justice. Take, for a very clear example of misrepresentation, the passage about the relations of Pepys with William Penn, the Quaker :

“ Meanwhile there was growing up next door to him that beautiful nature William Penn. It is odd that Pepys condemned him for a fop ; odd, though natural enough when you see Penn’s portrait, that Pepys was jealous of him with his wife. But the cream of the story is when Penn publishes his *Sandy Foundation Shaken*, and Pepys had it read aloud by his wife. ‘ I find it,’ he says, ‘ so well writ, as I think, it is too good for him ever to have writ it ; and it is a serious sort of book, and *not fit for everybody to read.*’ [The italics are Stevenson’s.] Nothing is more galling to the merely respectable than to be brought in contact with religious ardour. Pepys had his own foundation, sandy enough, but dear to him from practical considerations, and he would read the book with true uneasiness of spirit : for conceive the blow if, by some plaguy accident, this Penn were to convert him ! ”

And so on for some dozen lines more. But if the



reader, one in ten thousand, were to turn to Pepys to see what he really did say about Penn's book, he would find that what he thought dangerous in it was not its enthusiasm but its heresy. This is the passage: "Pelling hath got me W. Penn's book *against the Trinity*. I got my wife to read it to me," etc. The title of the book was *The Sandy Foundations Shaken: or those doctrines of one God subsisting in three distinct and separate persons, etc., refuted from the authority of Scripture testimonies and right reason*. So that all Stevenson's very cynical commentary on the words "not fit for everybody to read" rest on a simple misunderstanding. Or take another point. Pepys buys a "roguish French book," and notes in his Diary that he bought it in plain binding, meaning to burn it when read, "that it may not stand in the list of books, nor among them, *to disgrace them*, if it should be found." Stevenson paraphrases this: "He is full of precautions to conceal *the disgrace of the purchase*." But Pepys is writing as a collector with a respect to the dignity of his library; he is not even considering the question about the morality or immorality of reading "roguish" books. So, again, Stevenson's idea that Pepys was a sort of leaf insect who took his moral colour from his neighbours, and was only virtuous when under the influence of

Sir William Coventry, is not supported by the Diary. Coventry was no better than his contemporaries in regard to the seventh commandment, and in regard to the eighth, we find him more than once making a sort of *apologia* to Pepys. Or, once more, what ground is there for Stevenson's wild idea that Pepys intended his Diary to be one day made public? "The greatness of his life," he says, "was open, yet he longed to communicate its smallness also; and, while contemporaries bowed before him, he must buttonhole posterity with the news that his periwig was once alive with nits." I confess lively writing of this sort, when it belittles the characters of the dead without a spark of evidence, makes me angry. Stevenson quotes the solemn sentence with which the Diary closes; but if he had raised his eyes to the sentence next before it, he would have found that it disposed of his theory: "And thus ends all that I doubt I shall ever be able to do with my own eyes in the keeping of my journal, I being not able to do it any longer, having done now so long as to undo my eyes almost every time that I take a pen in my hand; and therefore, whatever comes of it, I must forbear: and therefore resolve from this time forward to have it kept by my people in long-hand, and must be contented to set down no more than is fit for them *and all the*

*world to know* ; or if there be anything, I must endeavour to keep a margin in my book open, to add here and there a note in shorthand with my own hand." Young gentlemen with a genius for style should be warned off criticism.

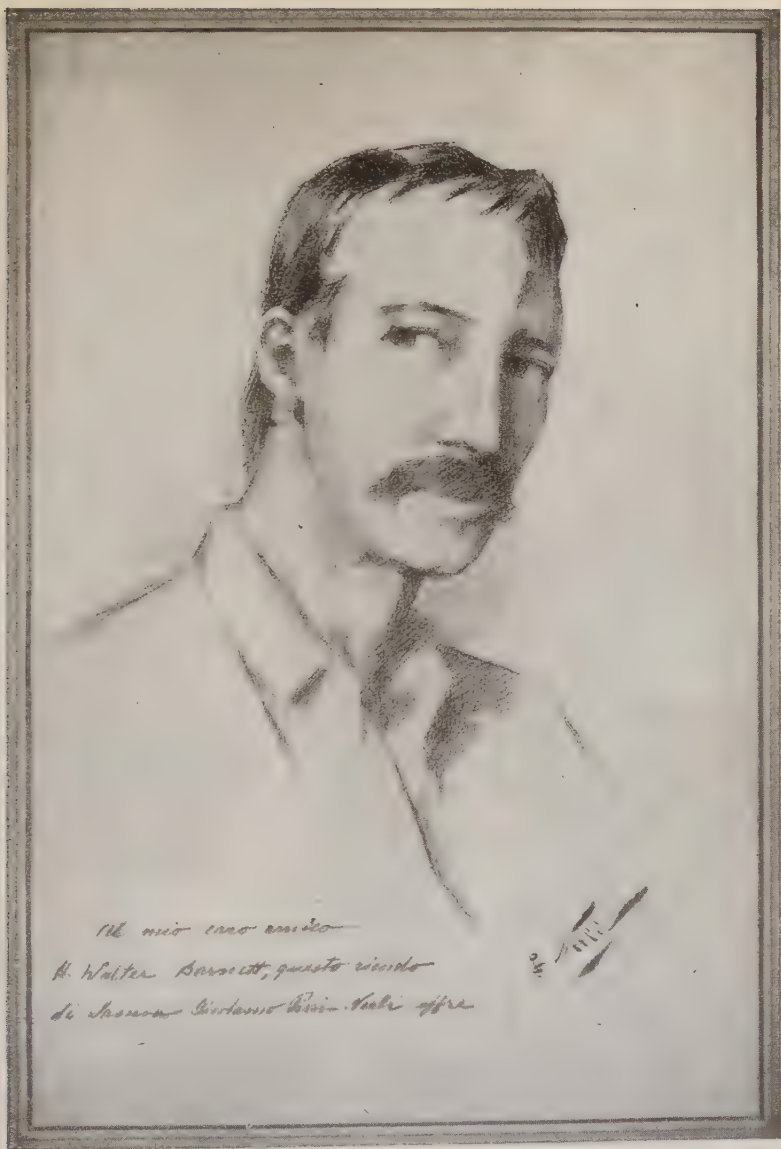
The valuable part of Stevenson's writing outside his stories is that in which he writes about himself. About himself and his travels and his meditations on men and things we could never have too much, because he looked at the world with fresh eyes. I have a fancy for testing a man's powers of natural description by his handling of a snow-storm ; and I remember the joy it gave me years ago to come upon this passage of our author :

" The snow fell with rigorous, relentless persistence ; sometimes the wind made a sally and scattered it in flying vortices ; sometimes there was a lull, and flake after flake descended out of the black night air, silent, circuitous, interminable. . . . The air was raw and pointed, not far below freezing ; and the flakes were large, damp, and adhesive. The whole city was sheeted up. An army might have marched from end to end and not a footfall given the alarm. If there were any belated birds in heaven they saw the island like a large white patch, and the bridges

like slim white spars, on the black ground of the river."

But in the travel books, natural description is kept in due subordination to the proper study of mankind; and there, as in the moral essays, we find Stevenson acclaiming with joy man's "imperfect virtues," and calling upon everybody to take up the great task of being happy themselves and making others happy. Quotation would be an endless luxury; but one passage may be allowed which we may well believe seemed to its author the conclusion of the whole matter; certainly for himself:

"All who have meant good work with their whole hearts have done good work, although they may die before they have the time to sign it. Every heart that has beat strong and cheerfully has left a hopeful impulse behind it in the world, and bettered the tradition of mankind. And even if death catch people, like an open pitfall; and in mid career, laying out vast projects and planning monstrous foundations, flushed with hope and their mouths full of boastful language, they should be at once tripped up and silenced, is there not something brave and spirited in such a termination? and does not life go down with a



*Al mio caro amico*

*H. Walter Barnett, questo ricordo  
di Giovanni Girolamo Nerli. Tuo affr*

*G. Nerli*

R. L. S.

From an original drawing by Count Girolamo Nerli, given by Stevenson to Mr. H. Walter Barnett, with whose permission it is now reproduced.





From *Treasure Island*  
(Cassells).

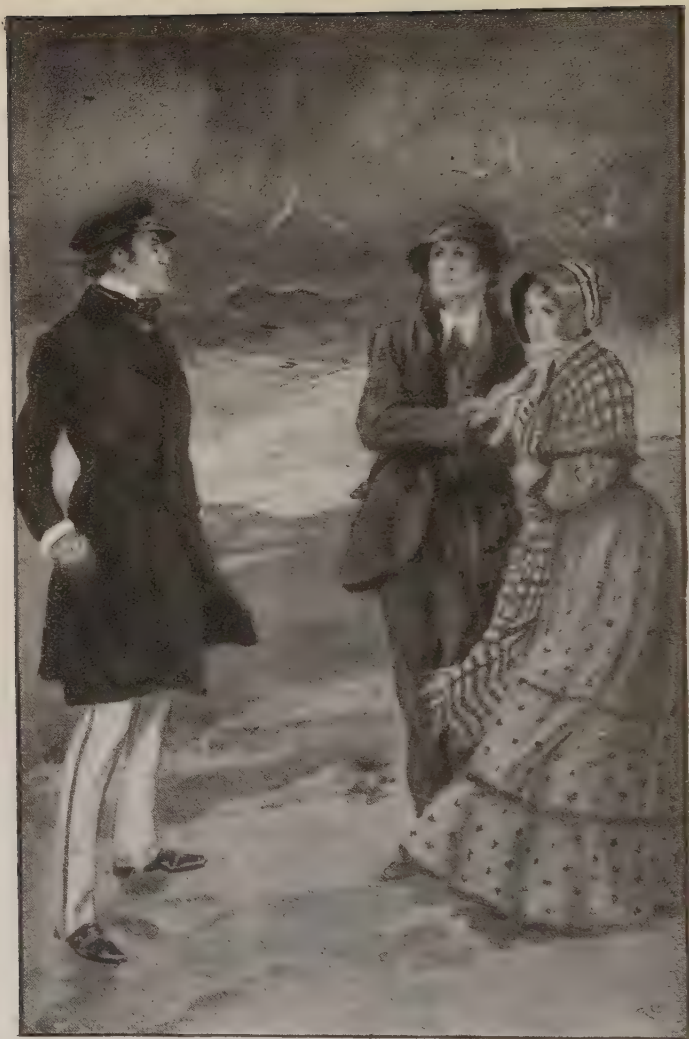
'DO YOU CALL THAT A HEAD  
ON YOUR SHOULDERS?'





"THE SKIPPER AND ALL THE REST WERE CAST INTO  
THE SEA BY THE METHOD OF WALKING THE PLANK."

Monochrome reproduction of painting by Wal Paget in *The Master of Ballantrae* (Cassells).



"THAT GIRL, AS YOU CALL HER, IS MY WIFE."

Monochrome reproduction of coloured frontispiece to *The Pavilion on the Links*.  
Illustrated by Gordon Browne. (Chatto & Windus.)

better grace, foaming in full body over a precipice, than miserably straggling to an end in sandy deltas? When the Greeks made their fine saying that those whom the gods love die young, I cannot help believing they had this sort of death also in their eye. For surely at whatever age it overtakes the man, this is to die young. Death has not been suffered to take so much as an illusion from the heart. In the hottest of life, a tip-toe on the highest point of being, he passes at a bound on to the other side. The noise of the mallet and chisel is scarcely quenched, the trumpets are hardly done blowing, when, trailing with him clouds of glory, this happy-starred, full-blooded spirit shoots into the spiritual land."

## II

Eight more volumes of Stevenson in the Pentland Edition lie before us,\* and call for a word of thanksgiving. Here are to be found the great romances, *Treasure Island*, *Kidnapped*, *Catriona*, *The Master of Ballantrae*, *Prince Otto*; here too, some of the masterpieces in little, *Thrawn Janet*, *Will of the Mill*, and *Markheim*; besides the biographical sketches and some other matters; food for many hours of delight to a multitude of young and old. On this large body of work the

\* 1908.

critics have long ago had their say, pointing out its beauties and defects, and assigning to its author his proper niche (relative to Sir Walter) in the Temple of Fame. The present writer cannot presume to sit in judgment on anybody ; but as the pleasant task of welcoming this reprint has been assigned him, he cannot perform it better than by acknowledging the debt he himself owes to these admirable books, and making a few notes of admiration against his favourite passages.

And first we have Stevenson to thank for his many inventions. " With a tale forsooth he cometh to us, with a tale which holdeth children from play, and old men from the chimney corner." And the tales all leave a good taste in the mouth. Fathers of families have been known to object to *Treasure Island* as a book for budding youth, on account of the extraordinary amount of blood splashed up and down the story. Stevenson thought, no doubt, that he was catering for a quite legitimate taste for heroic exploit, which takes in youth the elementary and savage shape of blood-letting ; and he did not realise that the greater verisimilitude of his own art made the colour he was so freely using something more than the red paint of the conventional buccaneering story. One wonders what reflections on this score passed through the mind of the author's

Puritan father, when, as Mr. Gosse informs us, the chapters were read out to him, evening after evening, as they were composed. If he remonstrated, his son no doubt took credit to his buccaneers for their scrupulous attention to the third commandment, as some compensation for their breach of the sixth; and, after all, buccaneers must do something to show their quality. But allowing that the murders are too many and too gruesome, still how well the story goes. How interesting it is from start to finish! How well the excitement is varied, and how cleverly the climax is led up to! It would have amused and pleased Stevenson to know that his pirate story, within twenty-five years of its publication, had achieved that final *cachet* of a classic, the being made the subject of a school-boy's examination. "Sketch the character of John Silver; by what other names was he known to his familiars? Give the context of the following sayings of his: (a) 'What's he doing with an echo to him?' (b) 'Dick was it? Then Dick can get to prayers.' (c) 'You're young, you are, but you're as smart as paint.' (d) 'Flint was cap'n; I was quartermaster, along of my timber leg.' " And the examiners are right; the genteel sea-cook is a careful study, and worth serious attention. As excellent, though more lightly



sketched, is Captain Smollett, one of those silent men (Gotthold and Utterson are other examples) of whom Stevenson was fond. And all the buccaneers are, within their limits, carefully drawn, so that we are in no more danger of confusing Israel Hands with George Merry than either of them with Ben Gunn. For pure invention *Treasure Island* is as fine a piece of work as Stevenson ever did. At the head of another department of the romantic tale, that of which Wandering Willie's story in *Redgauntlet* is a reputed masterpiece, some would place *Thrawn Janet*, others *Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. The latter suffers more than the former from the inevitable law that a tale of mystery, when the mystery is once known, must lose some of its interest. On the other hand it has the advantage in moral suggestiveness, and also in a more modern supernatural machinery. Perhaps one has to be born north of the Tweed to taste all the creepiness of *Thrawn Janet*; but everyone can appreciate the horribleness of Mr. Hyde, and the skilful difference, within the general likeness, of the impression he makes on the various characters in the story.

A second debt that we all owe to Stevenson is for not a few admirable dramatic pictures which have stamped themselves ineffaceably on the



memory. Most of the romances, indeed, are a series of such scenes, more or less vivid, in the most important of which some critical action constitutes a *tableau*. The most vivid of all in my own mind is that scene in the vale of Glencoe, where David and Alan are lying flat on a high rock in the sun's eye, while the red-coats are moving lazily through the hot afternoon in search of them.

“The soldiers kept stirring all day in the bottom of the valley, now changing guard, now in patrolling parties hunting among the rocks. These lay round in so great a number, that to look for men among them was like looking for a needle in a bottle of hay! and being so hopeless a task, it was gone about with the less care. Yet we could see the soldiers pike their bayonets among the heather, which sent a cold thrill into my vitals; and they would sometimes hang about our rock, so that we scarce dared to breathe. It was in this way that I first heard the right English speech; one fellow as he went by actually clapping his hand upon the sunny face of the rock on which we lay, and plucking it off again with an oath. ‘I tell you it’s ’ot,’ says he; and I was amazed at the clipping tones and the odd sing-song in which he spoke, and no less at that strange trick of dropping out the letter ‘h.’”

Other scenes that will suggest themselves to everybody are the duel by candlelight in *The Master of Ballantrae*, and the flinging of the guinea through the heraldic window in the same book. Indeed, the imagination of such incidents and their vivid portrayal was no small part of Stevenson's romantic art. The more successful of his stories move from picture to picture like a magic lantern. Where such pictures are lacking, as in the second part of *Catriona*, the story flags. Stevenson has himself told us, in his *Gossip on Romance*, how certain places made calls upon his fancy. "When I was a child I tried in vain to invent appropriate games for them, as I still try, just as vainly, to fit them with the proper story. Some places speak distinctly. Certain dank gardens cry aloud for a murder; certain old houses demand to be haunted; certain coasts are set apart for shipwreck. Other spots again seem to abide their destiny, suggestive and impenetrable, 'miching mallecho.'" And then, as will be remembered, he goes on to instance "the inn at Burford Bridge, with its arbours and green garden and silent eddying river," "and the old Hawes Inn at the Queen's Ferry"; and continues, "I have lived both at the Hawes and Burford in a perpetual flutter, on the heels, as it seemed, of some adventure that should justify the place;

but though the feeling had me to bed at night and called me again at morning in one unbroken round of pleasure and suspense, nothing befell me in either worth remark. The man or the hour had not yet come ; but some day, I think, a boat shall put off from the Queen's Ferry, fraught with a dear cargo, and some frosty night a horseman, on a tragic errand, rattle with his whip upon the green shutters of the inn at Burford." This essay was written in 1882 ; four years later the boat put off with David Balfour on board ; but the horseman still awaits incarnation.

Thirdly, we have to thank Stevenson for not a few friends, of various degrees in the social scale, but all pleasant companions. Best of all, perhaps, we know and like Mr. David Balfour (of Shaws). " David," said Stevenson, " is my own favourite, not for craftsmanship, but for human niceness, in which I have been wanting hitherto." He was referring to the book, and not to the character, but the remark as to human niceness is true of the character. He naturally recalls Jim Hawkins ; but Jim, though " nice," is too much the boy-hero, always under the limelight, whose very faults turn to the salvation of everybody ; whereas David is quite " human." So is his friend Alan Breck. And so is the Edinburgh company to which he introduces us, notably

Prestongrange and his clever daughter. Then again there is Prince Otto of Grunewald, who wins the sympathies of all the fair for his good looks and his misfortunes, and those of the self-conscious for his double portion of that moral malady. Some critics have been bold enough to say that the reason why these persons appeal so strongly to us is that they are all Stevenson himself in various fancy-dress. But to say that is to say what is obviously true up to a certain point, and beyond that obviously untrue. Every novelist and dramatist must speak through the lips of his characters, and he naturally chooses to put his own philosophy of life into the mouths of those persons with whom he is most in sympathy. And the converse holds also, that those persons, through whom the author himself speaks, will, Shakespeare always excepted, be more natural, and so more pleasing, than those who depend more largely upon imagination. Prince Otto, for whatever reason, is certainly a living soul; but some of us may have had our suspicions as to whether it was really blood that issued when the Baron von Gondremark was pierced by the Queen's dagger.

The essays which some persons prefer to the romances, are confined to those collected together as *Memories and Portraits*, in this series of volumes.



A GROUP AT SAMOA.  
LLOYD OSBOURNE, CAPT. WURMBRAND  
HENRY SIMELE, AND STEVENSON.

From *Stevenson's Works*,  
Pentland Edition (Cassells).

"Capt. Count Wurmbrand was a soldier of fortune in Serbia and Turkey, a charming, clever, kindly creature, and Henry Simele one of Stevenson's servants."—See Stevenson's *Letters*.



*Photo by Hollinger.*

MRS. ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

*From Stevenson's Works.*  
Pentland Edition (Cassells).

"Trusty, dusky, vivid, true,  
With eyes of gold and bramble-dew,  
Steel-true and blade-straight,  
The great artificer  
Made my mate."—*My Wife.*

*From Poems, by R. L. Stevenson.*  
(Chatto & Windus.)





*Photo by Falk, Sydney.*

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

Autographed and presented by Stevenson to Mr. H. Walter Barnett, with  
whose permission it is reproduced.



KALAKANA, LATE KING OF THE HAWAIIAN ISLANDS,  
ON THE VERANDA OF THE ROYAL BOAT HOUSE, AT  
HONOLULU, WITH STEVENSON.

"My address will be Honolulu . . . till probably April. . . . H.M. (King Kalakana), who is a gentleman of a courtly order and much tinctured with letters, is very polite; I may possibly ask for the position of Palace doorkeeper." (January, 1889.)—*Letters of R. L. Stevenson*. Edited by Sir Sidney Colvin. (Methuen and Heinemann.)

They include a certain amount of biographical and autobiographical work, full of interest to every Stevensonian, the *Gossip on Romance*, referred to above, a *Humble Remonstrance* which contains an interesting criticism of *Treasure Island*, and the famous essay on *A College Magazine*, in which Stevenson let us into the secret, much as conjurers do, of how he learned to write, namely, by photographing scenery, as Tennyson called it, and by "aping" any quality that impressed him in any writer. This indefatigable imitation (added to natural genius) no doubt resulted in that great variety of turns of phrase by which Stevenson's style is distinguished; but had it not also the result of imparting a certain want of repose to his style, the suggestion of an audience, which haunts the essays, and is only got rid of when the romancer is well on the war-path? And yet no one would have the essays other than they are.

## IN MEMORIAM

BY IAN MACLAREN

WHEN one came in with omens of sadness on his face and told us that Stevenson was dead, each man had a sense of personal bereavement. None of us had ever seen him, save one—and that was long ago ; none of us had ever read a letter of his writing, save one—and he ransacked his memory for the least word. We had no “ eagle’s feather ” to show ; there was nothing between this man and us save the mystical tie that binds a writer and his readers in the kingdom of letters. He had led us in through the ivory gate, and shown us things eye hath not seen ; and all his service had been given at a great cost of suffering. Filled with the enthusiasm of his art, he beat back death time after time, and only succumbed like J. R. Green and Symonds, his brethren in letters and affliction, after he had achieved imperishable fame, “ monumentum aere perennius.”

Stevenson had not to complain, with Sir Thomas More, that readers of books were so “ unkind and ungenteel that though they take

great pleasure and delectation in the work, yet, for all that, they cannot find in their hearts to love the author thereof"; for though he was exiled from his native land, yet he lived in the heart of every reading man, not only because he was a great writer, but also because he was a bright soul with faith in God and man.

Fourteen years ago our author laid down in the *Fortnightly Review* the "two duties incumbent on any man who enters on the business of writing—truth to the fact and a good spirit in the treatment." One dares to say without rebuke to-day, that he fulfilled his own conditions, for he saw life whole and he wrote of it with sympathy. He brought also to his task a delicate genius, which gave him an almost solitary place. It was difficult to name a living artist in words that could be compared with him who reminded us at every turn of Charles Lamb and William Hazlitt. There are certain who compel words to serve them and never travel without an imperial body-guard; but words waited on Stevenson like "nimble servitors," and he went where he pleased in his simplicity because everyone flew to anticipate his wishes. His style had the thread of gold, and he was the perfect type of the man of letters—a humanist whose Greek joy in the beautiful was annealed to a fine purity by his

Scottish faith ; whose kinship was not with Boccaccio and Rabelais, but with Dante and Spenser. His was the Magical touch that no man can explain or acquire ; it belongs to those only who have drunk at the Pierian spring. There is a place at the marriage feast for every honest writer, but we judge that our master will go to the high table and sit down with Virgil and Shakespeare and Goethe and Scott.

The mists of his native land and its wild traditions passed into his blood so that he was at home in two worlds. In one book he would analyse human character with such weird power that the reader shudders because a stranger has been within his soul ; in another he hurries you along a breathless story of adventure till your imagination fails from exhaustion. Never did he weary us with the pedantry of modern problems. Nor did he dally with foul vices to serve the ends of purity. Nor did he feed

“ A gibing spirit

Whose influence is begot of that loose grace

Which shallow laughing hearers give to fools.”

One subject he approached late in his work, but we are thankful he has at least given us Barbara Grant and Catriona. What he might have done one can only imagine, who expected



another Portia from his hands. He was buried far from the land he loved, but they chose his grave well, on the mountain top, and his funeral has been described already, save that his disciples were not there.

“ ‘ This man decided not to live, but know ;

Bury this man there ! ’

‘ Here—here’s his place, where meteors shoot, clouds form,  
Lightnings are loosened,

Stars come and go ! Let joy break with the storm,

Peace let the dew send !

Lofty designs must close in like effects ;

Loftily lying

Leave him—still loftier than the world suspects,

Living and dying.’ ”

## HOME FROM THE HILL\*

BY SIR W. ROBERTSON NICOLL

“ Home is the sailor, home from the sea,  
And the hunter home from the hill.”—R. L. S.

LET the weary body lie  
Where he chose its grave,  
'Neath the wide and starry sky,  
By the Southern wave,  
While the island holds her trust  
And the hill keeps faith,  
Through the watches that divide  
The long night of death.

But the spirit free from thrall,  
Now goes forth of these  
To its birthright, and inherits  
Other lands and seas :  
We shall find him when we seek him  
In an older home,—  
By the hills and streams of childhood  
'Tis his weird to roam.

\* First published in *Blackwood's Magazine*, February, 1895. Reprinted by kind permission of Messrs. Blackwood.

In the fields and woods we hear him  
Laugh and sing and sigh ;  
Or where by the Northern breakers  
Sea-birds troop and cry ;  
Or where over lonely moorlands  
Winter winds fly fleet ;—  
Or by sunny graves he hearkens  
Voices low and sweet.

We have lost him, we have found him :  
Mother, he was fain  
Nimbly to retrace his footsteps ;  
Take his life again  
To the breast that first had warmed it,  
To the tried and true,—  
He has come, our well belovèd,  
Scotland, back to you !

## STEVENSON'S BOOKS

BY S. R. CROCKETT

### AUTHOR'S NOTE

SITTING alone by the sea in the mid days of November, I wrote a little article on what I loved most in the works of Robert Louis Stevenson, and it was set in type for the January BOOKMAN. In itself a thing of no value, it pleased me to think that in his far island my friend would read it, and that it might amuse him. I have tried and failed to revise it in the gloom of the night that has come so swiftly to those who loved him. It would not do.

How could one alter and amend the light sentences with the sense of loss in one's heart? How sit down to write a "tribute" when one has slept, and started, and awaked all night with the dull ache that lies below Sleep saying all the time, "Stevenson is dead! Stevenson is dead!"?

It is true also that I have small right to speak of him. I was little to him; but then he was very much to me. He alone of mankind saw

what pleased him in a little book of boyish verses.

Seven years ago he wrote to tell me so. He had a habit of quoting stray lines from it in successive letters to let me see that he remembered what he had praised. Yet he was ever as modest and brotherly as if I had been the great author and he the lad writing love verses to his sweetheart.

Without reproach and without peer in friendship, our king-over-the-water stood first in our hearts because his own was full of graciousness and tolerance and chivalry.

I let my little article be just as I wrote it for his eye to see, before any of us guessed that the dread hour was so near the sounding which should call our well beloved "home from the hill."

S. R. CROCKETT.

*Penicuik, Midlothian.*

*December 19th, 1894.*

IN sunny Samoa, more thousands of miles away than the ungeographical can count, sits "The Scot Abroad." For thus Burton, the historian, sane, sage, and wise, wrote of Mr. Robert Louis Stevenson before his time. It is the wont of

Scotland that her sons, for adventure or merchandise, should early expatriate themselves. The ships of the world in all seas are engineered from the Clyde, and a "doon-the-watter" accent is considered as necessary as lubricating oil, in order that the plunging piston rods may really enjoy their rhythmic dance. If you step ashore anywhere "east of Suez and the Ten Commandments," ten to one the first man of your tongue who greets you will hail in the well-remembered accent of the Scotch gardener who chased you out of the strawberry plots of your unblessed youth.

But to us who "stop at home, on flowery beds of ease," made aware of ourselves only when the east wind blows and we think that we are back in St. Andrews, the typical "Scot Abroad" is neither Burton's Gentleman Companion at Arms nor the oily chief engineer, but Mr. Stevenson.

On high in a cool bowery-room on the hill-side, looking down on the league-long rollers forming themselves to be hurled on the shore, sits one with his heels on the coco-matting of Samoa, but his head over the Highland border. The chiefs gather for palaver (or whatever they are pleased to call hunkering-and-blethering out there), and they tell the Tale-teller of heads taken and plantations raided. And he stays his pen and



arbitrates, or he "leaves for the front," as though he were plenipotentiary of the Triple Alliance. But all the while it is James More Macgregor who is marching out arrayed in a breech-clout and a Winchester "to plunder and to ravish"—or carry off an heiress lass from the lowlands, as was good Macgregor use-and-wont.

They call the beautiful new complete "Stevenson" which Mr. Sidney Colvin and Mr. Charles Baxter have contrived and organised, the "Edinburgh" edition, because though the stars of the tropics glow like beacons, and in Apia the electric light winks a-nights like glow-worms amid a wilderness of green leaves, yet to the lad who sits aloft there are still "no stars like the Edinburgh street lamps." But my own local enthusiasms are duller, for the last night I was in Edinburgh I saw a wind (Rajputana and Edinburgh are the only two places where you can see wind)—I saw a wind, with the bit between its teeth, run off with itself down that romantic wall of hotels, which in the night looks like the thunder-battered wall of the dungeon of Buchan. I saw it snatch out a dozen gaps in the converging perspective of the gas-lamps, and bring down the chimney-cans clashing on the pavement like forest leaves in a November blast. So Mr. Stevenson, who does not live there, "for love and

euphony " names his collected edition (to which be all good luck and fostering breezes) " The Edinburgh Edition." I have just seen the first volume, which in its brightness and beauty seems a summary of all the perfections, and whose print recalls that in which the early novels of Scott were set up. Mr. Hole's portrait suffers a little from the excessive size of the hands, but in spite of this is by far the most characteristic and Stevensonian portrait ever done, and represents him exactly as his friends remember him at the most productive period his genius has yet known.

To me the most interesting thing in Mr. Stevenson's books is always Mr. Stevenson himself. Some authors (perhaps the greatest) severely sit with the more ancient gods, and serenely keep themselves out of their books. Most of these authors are dead now. Others put their personalities in, indeed; but would do much better to keep them out. Their futilities and pomposities, pose as they may, are no more interesting than those of the chairman of a prosperous limited company. But there are a chosen few who cannot light a cigarette or part their hair in a new place without being interesting. Upon such, in this life, interviewers bear down in shoals with pencils pointed like spears; and

about them as soon as they are dead—lo ! begins at once the “ chatter about Harriet.”

Mr. Stevenson is of this company. Rarest of all, his friends have loved and praised him so judiciously that he has no enemies. He might have been the spoiled child of letters. He is only “ all the world’s Louis.” The one unforgivable thing in a chequered past is that at one time he wore a black shirt, to which we refuse to be reconciled on any terms.

But when he writes of himself, how supremely excellent is the reading. It is good even when he does it intentionally, as in *Memories and Portraits*. It is better still when he sings it, as in his *Child’s Garden*. He is irresistible to every lonely child who reads and thrills, and reads again to find his past recovered for him with effortless ease. It is a book never long out of my hands, for only in it and in my dreams when I am touched with fever, do I grasp the long, long thoughts of a lonely child and a hill-wandering boy—thoughts I never told to any ; yet which Mr. Stevenson tells over again to me as if he read them off a printed page.

I am writing at a distance from books and collections of Stevensoniana, so that I cannot quote, but only vaguely follow the romancer through some of his incarnations. Of course

every romancer, consciously or unconsciously, incarnates himself, especially if he writes his books in the first person. It is he who makes love to the heroine; he who fights with the Frenchman "who never can win"; he who climbs the Mountain Perilous with a dirk between his teeth.

But Mr. Stevenson writes the fascination of his personality into all his most attractive creations, and whenever I miss the incarnation, I miss most of the magic as well. Jim Hawkins is only "the Lantern Bearer" of North Berwick Links translated into the language of adventure on the high seas—the healthier also for the change. I love Jim Hawkins. On my soul I love him more even than Alan Breck. He is the boy we should all like to have been, though no doubt David Balfour is much more like the boys we were—without the piety and the adventures. I read Stevenson in every line of *Treasure Island*. It is of course mixed of Erraid and the island discovered by Mr. Daniel Defoe. But we love anything of such excellent breed, and the crossing only improves it. Our hearts dance when Mr. Stevenson lands his cut-throats, with one part of himself as hero and the other as villain. John Silver is an admirable villain, for he is just the author genially cutting throats.

Even when he pants three times as he sends the knife home, we do not entirely believe in his villainy. We expect to see the murdered seaman about again and hearty at his meals in the course of a chapter or two. John is a villain at great expense and trouble to himself ; but we like him personally, and are prepared to sit down and suck an apple with him, even when he threatens to stove in our "thundering old blockhouse and them as dies will be the lucky ones." In our hearts we think the captain was a little hard on him. We know that it is Mr. Stevenson all the time, and are terrified exactly like a three-year-old who sees his father take a rug over his head and "be a bear." The thrill is delicious, for there is just an off-chance that after all the thing may turn out to be a bear ; but still we are pretty easy that at the play's end the bearskin will be tossed aside, the villain repent, and John Silver get off with a comfortable tale of pieces of eight.

No book has charted more authentically the topographical features of the kingdom of Romance than *Treasure Island*. Is that island in the South or in the North Atlantic ? Is it in the "Spanish Main" ? What is the Spanish Main ? Is it in the Atlantic at all ? Or set a jewel somewhere in the wide Pacific, or strung on some fringe of the Indian Ocean ? Who knows or



cares? Jim Hawkins is there. His luck, it is true, is something remarkable. His chances are phenomenal. His imagination, like ours, is running free, and we could go on for ever hearing about Jim. We can trust Jim Hawkins, and void of care we follow his star.

O for one hour of Jim in *The Wrecker* to clear up the mystery of the many captains, or honest and reputable John Silver to do for the poor Scot down below in a workman-like manner when he came running to him, instead of firing as it were "into the brown" till that crying stopped—a touch for which we find it hard to forgive Mr. Stevenson—pardon, Mr. Lloyd Osbourne.

Again, Alan Breck is ever Alan, and bright shines his sword; but he is never quite Jim Hawkins to me. Nor does he seem even so point-device in *Catriona* as he was in the round house or with his foot on the heather. But wherever Alan Breck goes or David Balfour follows, thither I am ready to fare forth, unquestioning and all-believing.

But when I do not care very much for any one of Mr. Stevenson's books, it is chiefly the lack of Mr. James Hawkins that I regret. Jim in doublet and hose—how differently he would have sped "The Black Arrow"! Jim in trousers and top hat—he would never have been found in



the "Wrong Box," never have gone out with Huish upon the "Ebb Tide." John Silver never threw vitriol, but did his needs with a knife in a gentlemanly way, and that was because Jim Hawkins was there to see that he was worthy of himself. Jim would never have let things get to such a pass as to require Attwater's bullets splashing like hail in a pond over the last two pages to settle matters in any sort of way.

I often think of getting up a petition to Mr. Stevenson (it is easy to get around Robin), beseeching "with sobs and tears" that he will sort out all his beach-combers and Yankee captains, charter a rakish, saucy-sailing schooner, ship Jim Hawkins as ship's boy or captain (we are not particular), and then up anchor with a Yo-Ho-Cheerily for the Isle of our Heart's Desire, where they load Long Toms with pieces of eight, and, dead or alive, nobody minds Ben Gunn.

## ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

BY SIR W. ROBERTSON NICOLL

WHILE we are all waiting with interest and expectation for Mr. Graham Balfour's *Life of Robert Louis Stevenson*,\* it may be worth while to consider where Stevenson stands now. As the years pass they disengage the virtue of a writer, and decide whether or not he has force enough to live. Will Stevenson live? Undoubtedly. He is far more secure of immortality than many very popular writers. The sale of his books may not be great, and he may even disappear from the marts of literature now and then, but he will always be revived, and it may turn out that his reputation will wear as well as that of Charles Lamb. For he engages his readers by the double gift of personality and style.

The personality of Stevenson is strangely arresting. In the first place it was a double personality. In his journey to the Cevennes he reflects that every one of us travels about with a donkey. In his *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and*

\* 1901.

*Mr. Hyde*, the donkey becomes a devil. Every Jekyll is haunted by his Hyde. Somebody said that *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* showed Stevenson as Poe, with the addition of a moral sense. Critics may differ as to the exact literary value of the famous little book, but as an expression of Stevenson's deepest thought about life it will retain its interest. He was not content to dwell in a world where the lines are drawn clear, where the sheep are separated from the goats. He would have a foot in both worlds, content to dwell neither wholly with the sheep, nor wholly with the goats. No doubt his ruling interest was in ethical problems and he could be stern in his moral judgments, as, for example, in his discussion of the character of Burns. He was by nature and training religious, "something of the Shorter Catechist." His earliest publication was a defence of the Covenanters, and in his last days he established close friendships with the Samoan missionaries. Yet he was by no means "orthodox," either in ethics or in religion. Much as he wrote on conduct, there were certain subjects, and these the most difficult, on which he never spoke out. On love, for example, and all that goes with it, it is quite certain that he never spoke his full mind—to the public at least.

Another very striking quality in his personality was his fortitude. He was simply the bravest of men. Now and then, as in his letter to George Meredith, he lets us see under what disabling conditions he fought his battle. Human beings in a world like this are naturally drawn to one who suffers and will not let himself be mastered or corrupted by suffering. They do not care for the prosperous, dominant, athletic, rich and long-lived man. They may conjecture, indeed, that behind all the bravery there is much hidden pain, but if it is not revealed to them they cannot be sure. They love Charles Lamb for the manner in which he went through his trial, and they love him none the less because he was sometimes overborne, because on occasions he stumbled and fell. Charlotte Brontë was an example of fortitude as remarkable as Stevenson, but she was not brave after the same manner. She allowed the clouds to thicken over her life and make it grey. Stevenson sometimes found himself in the dust, but he recovered and rose up to speak fresh words of cheer. He took thankfully and eagerly whatever life had to offer him in the way of affection, of kindness, of admiration. Nor did he ever in any trouble lose his belief that the Heart of things was kind. In the face of all obstacle he went steadily on with his work, nor did he ever

allow himself to fall below the best that he could do. An example so touching, so rare, so admirable, is a reinforcement which weary humanity cannot spare.

With these qualities, and, indeed, as their natural result, Stevenson had a rare courtesy. He was, in the words of the old Hebrew song, "lovely and pleasant," or rather, as Robertson Smith translated it, "lovely and winsome," in all his bearings to men of all kinds, so long as they did not fall under the condemnation of his moral judgment. With a personality so rich, Stevenson had the power of communicating himself. He could reveal his personality without egotism, without offence. Many writers of charming individuality cannot show themselves in their books. There is as little of themselves in their novels as there would be in a treatise on mathematics, if they could write it. Perhaps less. There have been mathematicians like Augustus de Morgan, who could put humour and personality into a book on geometry.

But Stevenson had not only a personality, he had a style. His golden gift of words can never be denied. He may sometimes have been too "precious," but the power of writing as he could write is so uncommon that he must always stand with a very few. We believe that Stevenson's

style is largely an expression of his courtesy. He wished as a matter of mere politeness and goodwill to express himself as well as he could. In fact, it was this courtesy that led him to his famous paradox about the end of art, his characterisation of the artist as the Son of Joy. "The French have a romantic evasion for one employment, and call its practitioners the Daughters of Joy. The artist is of the same family; he is of the Sons of Joy, chooses his trade to please himself, gains his livelihood by pleasing others, and has parted with something of the sterner dignity of man." The theory that all art is decoration cannot be seriously considered. It was certainly not true of Stevenson's art. He wished to please, but he had other and higher ends. He had to satisfy his exacting conscience, and he obeyed its demands sincerely and righteously, and to the utmost of his power. But he was too good a man to be satisfied even with that. Milton put into all his work the most passionate labour, but he did not believe that pleasure was the end of art. Nor would he have been satisfied by complying with his conscience. He had a message to deliver, and he delivered it in the most effective forms at his command. Stevenson had his message too, and uttered it right memorably. If the message had



to be put in a few words, they would be these :  
*Good, my soul, be brave !* He was bold enough to  
call Tennyson a Son of Joy, but he would have  
assented with all his soul to Tennyson's lines :

“ And here the singer for his art  
Not all in vain may plead ;  
The song that nerves the nation's heart  
Is in itself a deed.”

## STEVENSON: THE MAN AND HIS WORK

BY NEIL MUNRO

### I

HOWEVER barren of good literature the latter part of the Victorian era might appear to those worthy people whose interest in fiction terminated with Thackeray and Dickens, it has already in retrospect for a younger age the bounty and the glow of unrecoverable autumn days. "Other gifts have followed, for such loss, I would believe, abundant recompense," even though the weather is never likely to be quite so splendid, the morns so magic, as when enamoured youth attended at the harvest homes of Hardy, Meredith, and Stevenson. Fervour is an affair of the arteries, like youth itself, and if there be less elation for us in the work of our most gifted young contemporaries, it boots not to boast of what is doubtless due to some calcareous infiltration. They, too, may take some place in the remembrance and affection of an era. All good things are passed on.

Bleak and barren though the autumn of the

nineteenth century seemed to so many of our elders, because the blood was thin and cold, and the wits were perhaps less nimble, we know now that the weather and the crops were a decent average. It was our privilege to follow home with cheers the maiden-sheaves of three good husbandmen. Possibly not the greatest of them, as time may show, but personally the most beloved Robert Louis Stevenson, has, the soonest of the three, indubitably become a classic, the culminating figure in one epoch of the romance now temporarily somewhat in eclipse, his name alone enough to rouse the mood of gladness and affection, his work a national possession because acceptable and dear in more or less degree, like ancient songs, alike to finely cultivated and to simple people. In the years which have elapsed since his death in Samoa in 1894, his place with readers, however it be with men who write—a matter of secondary importance—has been each year more durably established. The young have not grown weary of his stories though, significantly, alone among the tales of his contemporaries they have become the vehicle of the teacher. His philosophy, which emanates from every line he wrote, and on reflection jumps to the mind in concrete form, has not, for the elderly, grown stale, *démodé*, nor disreputable, for faith, hope,

charity, courage, and human goodwill are abiding elements in the philosophies of all ages, things tangible to take hold of in this unintelligible world, and welcome to every wholesome appetite, like bread and water.

Save in the great gift of health, the stars that shone on Stevenson's nativity were all propitious. He had genius, sanity, gaiety, and an abiding charm of humanity which ensured him many ardent friendships. He was happy in his parentage, his opportunities, and the circumstances of his folk, which were such, that at no time, save very briefly in California, and then only for the sake of pride, had he any serious cause to apprehend the calls of Byles, the butcher. Fate never drove him to the necessity of banking down his fires periodically to boil a domestic pot ; he could afford to be deliberate and fastidious in the selection and in the execution of his tasks. No other writer in our time had his artistic reputation so carefully fostered and guarded by friends, themselves accomplished and discerning. They nursed it like a flower. They would have nothing from him but his best, even if he were prepared to give them otherwise, which consciously, he never was. Knowing that good work was expected from him, he came always " nobly to the grapple." In his prolonged valetudinarian absences, those

friends at home, in closest touch with English sentiment, appraising tendencies, certain of his power and jealous for his fame, saw to it that no inferior performance should be permitted to discount his merits. This high estimate of what he was destined to achieve was manifest very early when his father withdrew *The Pentland Rising* from circulation. It seems, further, to have led to the suppression in permanent form in England, till after his death, of several works regarded as inferior in quality, like *The Amateur Emigrant*, *In the South Seas* and *The Misadventures of John Nicholson*.

This zealous solicitude for the prestige of a young artist who seemed ready to accept its implication of a rare and precious genius which must never be allowed, as it were, to wet its feet, undoubtedly gave the cynics some excuse to scoff. England, hitherto, had never been a country to handle its artistic prodigies like fragile porcelain ; its glory had been men robust and prodigal, who spent themselves with royal generosity, with recklessness indeed, as kings with boundless stores of life and inspiration, too eager to worry about an occasional copper coin in the bulk of their golden largesse. In that early Stevensonian cult there was something, as it seemed, of what with insular complacency we are apt to regard as

the Continental: he was applauded as a *petit maître*, and all the trappings—the velvet jacket, the black flannel shirt, the great preoccupation with Style, and the tendency to triolets, were “in a concatenation according.” “You should do everything in minuet time” was Lord Chesterfield’s advice; good enough counsel for a *petit maître*, but not the deportment expected from a successor to Walter Scott, whose limp had never spoiled his stride across the mountains.

Yet Stevenson and his friends were right, with shadowy premonitions. He was not of triple brass, to embark on a *Comédie Humaine* with superb indifference to mortal limitation or the hope of making up in bulk what he might sacrifice in finish. That “something not ourselves” knows what a man is fit for, and dictates what he shall attempt, with a finger ever on the pulse, withdrawing nervous granules from the brain and so creating weariness when weariness is best. Under that dictation Stevenson confined himself, in the main, to enterprises which could be accomplished in the impetus of a single mood of inspiration, whose entire features, from start to finish, could be compassed in a moment’s thought, as lyrics are, or ought to be, conceived: his peculiar strength and pleasure were in fastidious revision more than in creation. In five-and-twenty





*Photo by T. Patrick Edinburgh.*

STEVENSON'S FAMILY AND HOUSEHOLD  
AT SAMOA, INCLUDING HIS WIFE, HIS  
MOTHER, AND LLOYD OSBOURNE.



From *Island Nights' Entertainments*  
(Cassells).

"I HAD HIM BY THE ANKLE."  
Drawn by W. Hatherell.

volumes of his works, there are only six or seven wherein—unaided by collaboration—he embarked on epic voyages (if novels like *Kidnapped* and *Treasure Island* may be so regarded); the bulk of his work, and possibly what shall last the longest, is brief and altogether lyrical. For Stevenson to plunge, like Scott or Dickens, into great uncharted seas with no land visible on the other side, or toil with the imperative printer at his heels, was a physical impossibility. He was essentially an inland voyager, leisuredly sailing single-handed, pulling up to the bank at nightfall, each day by itself a trip completed. It was well, then, that the sense, in himself and in his friends, of things impending, made them scrupulous about the nature of the freightage.

For one who only carried picked cargoes, during fifteen or sixteen years, and only for nine of them with the stimulus of public appreciation, the quantity alone in an edition like the Swanston, whose issue is the occasion of this article, is amazing.\* There are five-and-twenty volumes of essays, poems, travels, biography, tales and letters, wherein is seldom the slightest indication of the invalid. On the contrary the spirit which is

\* The Swanston Edition of the Works of Stevenson, 25 volumes. With an Introduction by Andrew Lang. (Chatto & Windus, in association with Cassell & Co., W. Heinemann, and Longmans, Green & Co.)

disengaged from this mass of a physical weakling's work is like that which emanates from beings hardy, self-assured and joyful. Only his language sometimes minces; his nature steps high-breasted like a stag, regardless of the weather. Doubtless, in tender human lives, where the ebbs are exceeding low, full tides come higher than elsewhere on the beaches; for sore days and inert are compensating hours when, pain dispelled and the banner of Bloody Jack hauled down, the world is clothed in grandeur—to breathe is bliss, and the voices of one's fellow-men are sweetest music. From these hours of manumission from his maladies, Stevenson conceived the world and life as things more infinitely grand than they are to such as have perpetual vigour. It is too often the hale, well-nourished, safe and comfortable who cloy of common pleasures like the light of sun, and grow critical and contemptuous of the very gestures of their fellow-beings.

Stevenson never aged nor lost his illusions, because to find himself awake at any time to the full and serene possession of untroubled faculties was, in a sense, reincarnation, a fresh beginning in a world of brave sublunary things. If he looked at the drab of life he saw it as a thing exceptional, a social distemper no more general than his own poor lungs, to be regarded like

his hæmorrhages, or the monsters of *The Dynamiter*, with that ironic humour which is the gentlemanly antagonist of terror. Fashions in fiction chop and change as in gowns and millinery ; the waist-line has come down of late, and novels for this spring season are didactic, sociological, political, and all that to the time of Stevenson a novel, any more than poetry or painting, should not be, but idealism, romance, and even sentiment—that horrid thing we condemn so loudly when the sense of it is atrophied in ourselves—have only to be expressed with the authority of genius to be assured at any time of welcome and applause. The world which cherishes the work of Robert Louis Stevenson, which buys more of his books than it bought when each one, freshly published, had a rubric in the calendar, and which in eighteen years has put three costly complete editions to a premium, has not yet banished fancy.

To impress by power alone is feasible in art ; it was done by Balzac and Dumas, but more to personality than to power does human affection for any length of time give its allegiance, and the combination, in the right degree, is irresistible. More potent than the conscious art of Stevenson to retain the place he holds is his individuality as revealed in his career and obvious in his work.



His key to our hearts is a fine Horatian urbanity, a grace for the moment lost among practitioners of letters, who, perched on a pedestal of self-approval, preach at us fanatically and rudely criticise the things we love. With his urbanity commingled another element sometimes regarded as antagonistic to it, namely, irony. It is often the resort of the embittered and the harsh, but likewise it has always been the weapon of men with an inability to shout across the table against the cock-sure. In its amiable form it does not lapse to cynicism, being sensitive and gentle, having no source in a flattering self-esteem. This spirit of kindly mockery pervades the work of Stevenson. It animates much of his verse, even, and there perceived so often as an undertone of modest and amused self-criticism, has doubtless contributed to the hesitation with which some of his heartiest admirers accept him as a poet. Very few of his poems, his widow tells us, were conceived with any other purpose than the entertainment of the moment. The metrical inspiration of some of them is easily to be discovered, for, like Burns and Kipling, he was ever best at a song when he had an air to fit it to. When we cut the numbers of *Underwoods* or "Songs of Travel" from day to day out of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, they seemed perfect little gems of unpretentious thicket



song, which may be sometimes sweeter, even to fastidious ears, than the uproar of the nightingale. To me, at all events, they still have a charm, perhaps, not wholly in their essence but maintained by memory and association. There cried, and still cries in them, the soul of exile and of "old unable years." His Scottish verse is in a different category; the gentle ironist is there too obvious. Stevenson's accurate and forceful use of the vernacular is not to be denied, but he used it in his verse in a manner not wholly unsophisticated, in hours when the artistic possibilities of the thing were the inspiration and not the heart's emotions.

Urbanity and irony, though not the stuff of immortal poetry, are nowhere more effective than in the essay, whose best exponents have taught us to regard these qualities as virtually indispensable. It is therefore more in the essay than in verse or novel that Stevenson's individuality and charm as man and writer are best revealed, and it is impossible to quarrel with the conclusion of Mr. Andrew Lang in his introduction to the Swanston Edition that we have in Stevenson "the master British essayist of the later nineteenth century," by reason of his vivacity, vitality, his original reflections on life, and his personal and fascinating style, regarding which it is perhaps unfortunate

that he took the world too much into his confidence, since "sedulous ape" is the readiest criticism to come to the lips of the Philistine. Poets first make poetry, and only afterwards learn about anapæsts and amphibrachys that they may understand their critics. Some such post-liminious after-application of old canons to acts already done intuitively is as common with artists as with politicians, and Stevenson's paper on "The Technical Elements of Style," like Poe's account of the composition of *The Raven* is more or less an artists' game, an ebullition of energetic gaiety; his own style had been directed by ear and eye, associative idea, and a natural taste for the verbally unexpected, the surprise. "My style is from the Covenanting writers," he said. Let those who are impressed by such an airy statement, read Patrick Walker and be disillusioned. In truth, any derivation of Stevenson's style from any particular predecessor is tenuous, though his philosophy and his tingling sense of out-door things, his tolerance towards the "friendly and flowing savage" in mankind may have been got directly from America. There are thousands of indications that for his thinking he owed as much to Whitman and Thoreau as to any of the gentlemen prescribed at the best academies. His style, in fine, is an incarnation

of his thought and character, and the urbanity and fastidiousness of his nature pervade his rhythm and cadence, the choice and order of his words as much as the selections of his themes. His language could never have been the ready-made stuff of literary slop-shops and the distaste for platitude, which with most people is confined to platitude of phrase or idea, extended, in him, to the adjective. No man was ever less constituted to feel happy in a second-hand pair of trousers, and the search through life and words for what was most in harmony with himself was unsatisfied by anything short of his private ideal.

Where Stevenson thought himself beholden to anyone he was prompt and frank enough to mention it, and generally, as in the case of the Covenanters, gave more credit than was due. His acknowledgments of indebtedness to Defoe, Poe, Kingsley and Marryat for conceptions in his first book, *Treasure Island*, are equivalent to an admission that islands, parrots, skeletons and dead men's chests are the monopoly of who first makes use of them in fiction. *Treasure Island* none the less, in every particular was from his private mint. But another tale of his, *St. Ives*, had—as I may be alone in fancying—its inception in a narrative which he probably had read in youth in the pages of *Chambers's*

*Miscellany*. In a volume of that promiscuous and delightful periodical, once dear to Scottish households, there is given a translation from the French of a "Story of a French Prisoner of War in England," which supplies almost all the essential mechanism of *St. Ives*, including the duel in the citadel. Champdivers and Goguelat each fought with half of a pair of scissors attached to a wand ; in the French narrative the encounter was with blades of knives so utilised. There is another duel scene of Stevenson's—that by candle-light in the garden in *The Master of Ballantrae*—which seems like a transfigured memory of a similar episode between the Duc de Champdoce and George de Croisenois in a story of Gaboriau's. Of the myriad of such dramatic hints conveyed in the work of the superficial and uninspired who knew not into what recesses of pure gold their picks had reached, I wish he had lived to avail himself still more, for from literature as from life he took no hints but to adorn and elevate.

In two of his stories—*Kidnapped* and *Catriona*—the influence of Walter Scott, I think, is obvious. He had read *Rob Roy* at the age of ten, and stumbled half asleep into the region of Highland romance as Scott invented it, with the result that save for some actual

glimpses he got himself of the Highlands, he saw them ever after in a measure through the Wizard's eyes. "When I think of that novel," he wrote in after years, "I am impatient with all others; they seem but shadows and impostors." Yet there are few Highlanders, I think, who would not, so far as purely Highland features are concerned, prefer the adventures of David Balfour to those of *Waverley* or *Rob Roy*. No nice considerations about even an approximate realism governed Scott's treatment of Gaelic life and character: he looked at them as Professor Reinhardt looks at Sophocles, with a single eye to their effect as pageantry, and saw them in a light that never was on land or sea. He never reported the speech of the native either in Erse or English but with magnificent insouciance, and a grotesque improbity which has unhappily become stereotyped in most of his successors, and his Gaelic characters are equally remote from actual type. I hesitate to cavil about novels which at times have been my own delight, but the truth is imperative, that Allan Macaulay is the ill-begotten offspring of that gigantic humbug, Macpherson's *Ossian*, and *Rob Roy*, in almost every manifestation, is a Borderer without one drop of mountain blood.

Stevenson was undoubtedly inspired by *Rob*



*Roy*, but though he might vow "death to the optic nerve," he used his eyes in this particular territory of Scotland more conscientiously than Scott. He saw the masses of his picture with the eyes of Scott; the details were his own perception. It is the veritable Highland wind that blows across his pages; his glens and coasts have the impressiveness of things emotionally remembered. He had, too, a quicker ear than Scott for alien idioms and turns of utterance, and had evidently read Campbell's *Tales of the West Highlands* with profit to his manipulation of the thought and speech of persons like Alan Breck and Catriona. Further, he had grasped some salient features of the Gaelic character, and though he suggested in a letter to Mr. Barrie that Alan Breck was a Highlander only in his name and otherwise a Sassenach, he did himself there a vast injustice. It was a writer with a marvellous power to reconstruct the pterodactyl from a single tooth who, from one or two letters in the Introduction to *Rob Roy*, was able to create the spy James Mor Drummond, as deadly true to one type of Celtic character as it was to the actual history of James Mor, though Stevenson did not know it. Oddly enough, as it may seem to such as do not realise the irony of art, the only blundering chapter in *Kidnapped* has been among the



most admired—the piping contest in Balquidder, and that pipers improvise and ornament their improvisations with “warblers” is an error as persistent now as cairngorms or the toast “with Highland honours.”

It seems almost a disloyalty to comment upon an inappreciable lapse like this in one who, to the compatriot heart at all events, endears himself by countless virtues of which not least was an almost pious tendency to confine his criticism to himself and his achievements. We rejoice in him, not only as in him range the perfect artist who has given glad hours and the example of intrepidity to a host of people widely set apart in islands of the sea, and in the depths of continents and in their circumstances, but also as another vindication of a racial spirit capable of flowering into beauty even where “the bells clash of a Sunday, and the wind squalls, and the salt showers fly and beat.” From the loins of those Cyclopean men who fought on coast and skerry with the monstrous obstacles of nature—this gentle being with a tender hand to fashion gems! From a long heredity of Puritan austerity, the elegant and debonair!

April, 1912.

## II

The third five-volume instalment of the Swanston edition of Stevenson's works is now\* in the hands of the subscribers, and includes three of his most characteristic novels, the whole of his poems with seventeen additional pieces not in most editions, and all the plays written in collaboration with W. E. Henley.

*Deacon Brodie*, *Admiral Guinea*, *Beau Austin*, and *Macaire* have never been successful either from the box-office point of view or in the estimate of the dramatic critics, and the passage of time, which, sooner with prose drama than with any other kind of literature, makes the fashion of the work antique or obsolete, renders it more unlikely every year that any of the plays in question can be revived with even moderate popular success. The technique of the dramatist since these plays were written has been altered all in the direction of realism ; soliloquies and asides are now supposed to be intolerable, though it only wants a dramatist of genius to restore those old conventions to the importance and acceptance which they once enjoyed ; but not by reason of this is the actor-manager indifferent to the plays of Stevenson and Henley. There are purely

\* November, 1912.

personal considerations why he will always choose another *Macaire* than this—considerations of vanity and diplomacy ; but beyond that, he discerns certain elemental qualities in the plays which in any age would militate against their acceptance on the stage however they may charm in private reading.

With Stevenson, however it may have been with Henley, the mood in which the work was done was inimical to dramatic success. Plays no more than poems should be written in fun, as a pleasant literary sport for the leisure hours of gentlemen with the more serious affairs of life for the moment in suspense, and there is every evidence that it was in the same gay, irresponsible spirit in which he made Davos Platz woodcuts that Stevenson gambolled with Thalia. That merry and illuminating essay entitled “ A Penny Plain and Twopence Coloured,” gives the clue to Stevenson’s attitude to the drama ; he was the child of Skelt, and his notion of a play, to the end, appears to have been *Three-fingered Jack* or *Jack Sheppard*, touched up with genuine literary style, the characters robust, and coloured with crimson lake, the speeches orotund and rhetorical, the period thrown far enough back to obviate any chance of the audience finding out that action and speech were of no real age or

clime but simply Skeltery. The plays, in short, were written with the tongue in the cheek, and no mixed audience will stand that. As literary excursions they may be read repeatedly with pleasure; particularly for their banter, but it is to the sophisticated they appeal; on the stage the brilliancy of their writing fails to make up for their inability to rouse emotion. It was the verdict of a quarter of a century ago; it is the verdict of to-day, when the plays are sometimes presented by a repertory company.

Henley unquestionably provided most of the staying power for both collaborators; he was hopeful that there might be money in them long after Stevenson had come to look on them with indifference or disdain. Of *Deacon Brodie*, when produced in 1884, Stevenson wrote that it was "d——d bad." In the following year he wrote significantly to Henley: "Do you think you are right to send *Macaire* and *The Admiral* about? Not a copy have I sent, nor (speaking for myself, personally) do I want sent." The re-perusal of *The Admiral*, by the way, was a sore blow. "Eh, God, man! it's a low, black, dirty, blackguard piece, vomitable in many parts, simply vomitable; Pew is in places a reproach to both art and man. What I mean is that I believe in playing dark with second- and

third-rate work ; *Macaire* is a piece of job work hurriedly bockled." These were views, by the way, emphatically anticipated by his father ; they greatly exaggerated the defects of the plays, but with this reservation, father and son were right.

Yet, oddly enough, the spirit of a paper game, with which Stevenson set about play-writing, only to discover that the grown-up world takes its plays seriously, in no way impairs the effect of *A Child's Garden of Verses*, also composed in sportive hours—the sportive hours, as it happened, of an author at the time experiencing the mingled joys of hæmorrhage, sciatica and ophthalmia. Though the gentle ironist peeps out sometimes in these nursery recollections, and the deliberate artist always, there is never any mood of insincerity ; all is bathed in the spirit of a man in whom the thought of his past years did "breed perpetual benediction," in whom the innocence of any childhood was a thing to reverence, at all events to treat with tenderness. It was by *A Child's Garden of Verses* he made his first impression as a poet, and it will probably be found to maintain his poetical reputation longer than any of its successors, for this particular song-sequence is unique in English verse, and the thing essayed can never conceivably be better done.

There is, of course, much in *Underwoods* and *Songs of Travel* that delights maturer moods more lastingly ; “ Home no Home to me,” “ In the Highlands, in the Country Places,” “ Blows the Wind To-day,” “ The House Beautiful ” and almost all the Scots pieces, strike a note peculiarly Stevensonian and beautiful. In the “ Additional Poems,” given in Vol. XIV, I miss one anonymously published under Henley’s editing, when a prize was offered for the identification of its author :

“ We found Him first as in the Dells of May  
 The Dreaming Damsel finds the earliest Flower ;  
 Thoughtless we wandered in the Evening Hour :  
 Aimless and pleased we went our Random Way :  
 In the foot-haunted City, in the Night,  
 Among the alternate Lamps we went and came  
 Till, like a humorous Thunderbolt, that Name,  
 The hated Name of BRASH, assailed our Sight.  
 We saw, we paused, we entered, seeking Gin.  
 His wrath, like a huge Breaker on the Beach,  
 Broke instant forth. He on the Counter beat  
 In his infantile Fury ; and his Feet  
 Danced Impotent Wrath upon the Floor within.  
 Still as we fled we heard his Idiot Screech.”

*Catriona* and *The Master of Ballantrae*, I referred to in a former notice of the Swanston Edition. *The Wrecker*, which, with *The Ebb Tide*, brought Stevenson first to the attention of many sadly imperceptive readers who had never previously found him up to their standard of sensationalism,



was probably the most extensively sold of all his larger books. It was the first novel in which he wrote of characters and conditions of life contemporary with himself, so qualifying what Mr. Lang—of all men!—seems to regard as his one deficiency. No modern novel of adventure has a more auspicious opening; the Prologue breathes a tropical and magic air, but that key is not sustained, and though one reads *The Wrecker* again for the sake of Captain Nares, and Loudon Dodd, and the fascinating Jim Pinkerton, one feels that the story could have been told as well and less amorphously by many other practitioners of the police novel.

### III

In the latest instalment\* of the admirable Swanston edition of the Works of Robert Louis Stevenson are the books to be regarded as his contribution to the science, art or sport—whichever it may be—of Politics. He was apparently a philosophic Tory; in practice governed by the most democratic ideals, but withal, when it came to stated principles, a contemner of the "G.O.M.," Home Rule and Mr. Hyndman. In the happy sanctuary of Samoa, a little king in exile, experiencing the joys of a sort of feudal lord, it

\* January, 1913.

seemed to him that Britain, shedding every rag of feudalism as fast as it could, was drifting to perdition. There is an essay on "The Day after To-morrow" in the sixteenth of these volumes which shows his apprehension of an overwhelming socialism wherein the official inspector should be overriding all, and our condition something far more like the ant-heap than any previous human polity. In his writings, however, are few such warm deliverances on the problems of his native land; he was out of the fight before the bricks were really seriously flying, and we count it fortunate that his political excursions in the main confined themselves to the isles of his adoption, where the issues were less complicated, and the party protagonists a little more romantic than they are with us at home. *A Foot-note to History and Letters from Samoa* may have seemed to some readers an unfortunate divagation from the proper business of his life, but these diversions are traditional in the best of imaginative writers, and they serve to prove some human touch with things in actual life. When Stevenson settled in Samoa he found the island with a native nominal king and a half, and German influence obnoxiously pre-eminent; the white officials appointed by the Berlin Convention quite unequal to their task. The "Foot-note" and these Samoan

letters to *The Times* and the *Pall Mall Gazette* may have as little influence on his future reputation as the *Defensio Secunda* has on the repute of Milton, and they only partly served their purpose, for, though the two obnoxious officials were withdrawn mainly on his intervention, his friend the dethroned Mattaafa gained nothing by it.

Nor were his other divagations into the history, life and manners of these ultimate isles quite to the taste of eager Stevensonians. When he began the series of travel papers now known as *In the Seven Seas* it was auspiciously ; the Odyssean glamour was about his opening, where we share his wonder and delight in that first land-fall. But *The Isles of Vivian*, which made him bond-slave for the rest of his life, when seen too long and intimately, refused to sustain the emotional ardour, the subjective beauty of their first conception, and the task he had embarked on with elation speedily began to chafe. We have here, as in the Edinburgh Edition, but a selection from the South Sea articles contributed in 1891 to *Black and White* and the *New York Sun* ; with the addition of a half-section omitted from the Edinburgh Edition describing a visit to the Kona coast of Hawaii and the lepers' port of embarkation for Molokai. That part of the work which

best pleased Stevenson himself was the section treating of the Gilbert Islands, and it derives additional interest as describing a state of manners and of government now passed away.

The magic air of the Nukahiva landfall is repeated in "The Beach of Falesa," the best tale of *The Island Nights' Entertainments*, where the narrator sees his island first at dawn as Conrad's sailor sees the East in *Youth*, mysterious and odorous. The very best criticism of it came from the author himself in a letter to Sidney Colvin :—"It is the first realistic South Sea story ; I mean with real South Sea character and details of life. Everybody else who has tried, that I have seen, got carried away by the romance, and ended in a kind of sugar-candy sham epic, and the whole effect was lost—there was no etching, no human grip, consequently no conviction. Now I have got the smell and look of the thing a good deal. You will know more about the South Seas after you have read my little tale than if you had read a library. As to whether anyone else will read it I have no guess. I am in an off time, but there is just the possibility it might make a hit ; for the yarn is good and melodramatic, and there is quite a love-affair—for me." It is to be noticed that "The Beach of Falesa," in 1892 was regarded as immoral in the absence of a marriage certificate :

"It is a poisoned bad world for the romancer, this Anglo-Saxon world," said the indignant author.

"*The Ebb Tide*, or Stevenson's Blooming Error—about as grim a tale as ever was written, and as grimy and as hateful," was the author's final judgment on a tale which gave him a great deal of trouble, and emerged from his hands at last seriously curtailed in its proportions as intended. In his correspondence, curiously, there is little or no indication of the share that his stepson, Mr. Lloyd Osbourne, had in its design and preparation, and when it first appeared, all the good parts in it—as the opening chapters—were ascribed to Stevenson, and all the bad to his collaborateur. A note by Mr. Osbourne to the present edition shows some natural resentment of so unflattering a conclusion, and he explains that the early parts of both *The Wrecker* and *The Ebb Tide* were entirely his as well as the whole inception of Huish's scheme. The collaboration produced a work of considerable popularity ; of its kind the tale is excellent ; but its dialogue and its narrative style are on different planes, and it lacks the artistic unity of that fine fragment *Weir of Hermiston*, or even *St. Ives*, as completed by Quiller-Couch.

## WITH R. L. S. THROUGH THE LAND OF WAR

BY J. A. HAMMERTON (Written in War Time)

WAS there ever a book so informed with the delicate fragrance of peace as *An Inland Voyage* of R. L. Stevenson? To recall the sweet content with which one first read that enchanting story of a canoe journey by sluggish waterways through the pastoral lands of Northern France, touches the heart with a great longing for an end to these harassing days of war and a return to that care-free life when one might go a-gipsying for the sheer delight of tranquil travel. If it be that such days may come no more for many of us, we can do no better than take this companionable book from the shelf and, yielding ourselves to its charm, live over again in imagination those glorious days by the Sambre and the Oise. There is no anodyne more potent than may be found in these pages of R. L. S. when the heart is seared with the "latest official communiqué" from the blood-sodden fields of war.

Yet it is of war that I am about to write—of war and of long-lost days of peacefulness. Often



since the Germans swept into Belgium and poured over the French frontier have my thoughts gone back to a pilgrimage I made a dozen years ago along the route of *An Inland Voyage*. For it was through "this very smiling tract of country" which R. L. S. pioneered so peacefully in the late August of 1876 that the blond beast was to pass with fire and frightfulness at the same season thirty-eight years later. If he were alive to-day to what great issues would not the pen of Tusitala have been engaged, as his blood would have boiled at the foulness which the Hun had spread over all that smiling land?—the Hun of whom he warned us in *A Foot-note to History* and from whose clutches the Great War was to save the mortal remains of him who sleeps in far Samoa, where the Union Jack soon supplanted the pirate flag of Germany.

Well can I imagine what has happened along the route of *An Inland Voyage* since August, 1914, when I have seen the havoc which the war has wrought in many another once "very smiling tract" of France and Flanders, but I purpose no imaginary voyage by little rivers which so recently ran blood. My present aim is merely to recall the associations of R. L. S. with places which were scenes set for his dainty comedy of vagabondage, and which war was later to use for the staging of the world's tragedy.

The Inland Voyage began at Antwerp. Stevenson had a companion, the late Sir Walter Simpson, and each voyager paddled his own canoe. That of R. L. S. was named *Arethusa*—a name of old and new honour in our sea story—Sir Walter's *Cigarette*.

“ We made a great stir in Antwerp docks,” says R. L. S., as they launched their canoes, when a squally wind was blowing. He tied the sail despite the obvious danger, though “ not without some trepidation,” and makes an excellent start in his philosophising journey with the reflection :

“ It is certainly easier to smoke with the sheet fastened ; but I had never before weighed a comfortable pipe of tobacco against an obvious risk, and gravely elected for the comfortable pipe. It is a commonplace, that we cannot answer for ourselves before we have been tried. But it is not so common a reflection, and surely more consoling, that we usually find ourselves a great deal braver and better than we thought.”

How many a time has this same thought come to our gallant young lieutenants at their first going “ over the top ” ? It has been the theme of countless stories of “ trial under fire ” since the war began.

The wind served the canoeists well up the Scheldt, he tells us, and thereafter up the Rupel



NOYON CATHEDRAL—WEST FRONT.

"If ever I join the Church of Rome, I shall stipulate to be Bishop of Noyon on the Oise."—R. L. S.



THE VILLAGE STREET, MOY.  
 "Moy was a pleasant little village."—R. L. S.



THE PLACE DE L'HÔTEL DE VILLE, NOYON.  
 As it was in the time of *An Inland Voyage*.

as far as Boom, where next morning they took to the still waters of the Willebroek Canal. Brussels was reached by dint of much paddling in drizzling rain, which did not damp his enthusiasm for the life of the canal folk. "Of all the creatures of commercial enterprise, a canal barge is by far the most delightful to consider," he writes. Alas, even these delightful creatures have long been caught in the toils of war and many have I seen in inland waterways of the war zone with great red crosses on their hulls, carrying sad cargoes which R. L. S. had never imagined. Others there are now on these same canals that mount big guns or creak clumsily through the locks, laden with the horrid material of destruction instead of the fruitful things of "commercial enterprise."

From Brussels the canoeists took train to Maubeuge, their frail crafts stowed away in the goods vans. Few names are more fraught with meaning for us to-day than that of Maubeuge, the town of "might-have-beens." If the French had been able to hold it—as they might, had they placed their faith in trenches and field fortifications instead of in stone walls—how different the whole course of the war! But, equally so, had the Germans been able to crush Sir John French's little army of heroes against it in the retreat from Mons, the story of the war would have been strangely different.



“ There was nothing to do, nothing to see. We had good meals, which was a great matter, but that was all.” But what was there not to do and to see there in the last days of August and during the first week of September, 1914, when the garrison of over 30,000 French troops sought in vain to hold the place against the invaders? To-day also, there would be much to do and to see; but the good meals would be more difficult to come by—and that also is a great matter. The driver of the hotel omnibus belonging to the Grand Cerf, where the voyagers put up and where Prussian officers have now swaggered these four long years, was the one person in Maubeuge who interested R. L. S.

“ ‘ Here I am,’ said he. ‘ I drive to the station. Well. And then I drive back again to the hotel. And so on every day and all the week round. My God, is that life?’ I could not say I thought it was—for him. Might not this have been a brave African traveller, or gone to the Indies after Drake? ”

Whoever was driving the Grand Cerf bus when the Great War began would have no need to complain of the dullness of Maubeuge and the lack of excitement. Myself, I found Maubeuge none so dismal as it is made to appear in Stevenson's pages, where the only adventure that befell



was Sir Walter Simpson's narrow escape from arrest for drawing the fortifications—those fortifications that were to give so poor a return for the money spent on them. In the pleasant little square of the town I recall a spirited monument to the sons of the country-side who died for France in the last war. It will be a great day for France when Maubeuge can set up another memorial to those who have laid down their lives since the August of 1914.

The region of Maubeuge reminded me not a little of some parts of England's "Black Country." "Look you," said a stout gentleman with whom I spoke by the wayside, when, with my bicycle, I was setting out along the canal bank in the track of the inland voyagers, "we have glass works, potteries, iron foundries, engine works, copper and many other industries here." The Boche knew this only too well, and the many industrial places that cluster around the ineffectual forts of Maubeuge have now long been used to help on the war against the country of their hapless owners. Indeed, the bitterest thing about the war has been the way in which the enemy has turned France's resources against herself.

The first stage of their paddling along the canalised Sambre brought them at nightfall to the little hamlet of Quartes, but they had to

trudge afoot a mile farther to the village of Pont-sur-Sambre to find a lodging for the night. This Pont will always be associated in my mind with an odd incident of the war.

Late in 1914 a photograph came to me from a correspondent in France. It represented a scene of military activity, and was vaguely described as "British divisional head-quarters, with dispatch riders setting out for the front." A true enough description, no doubt, but a curious tower was seen in the background and I knew that tower well, as R. L. S. had written of it and I myself had photographed it. "Away on the left, a gaunt tower stood in the middle of the street," he writes. "What it had been in past years, I know not: probably a hold in time of war." This gaunt tower identified the place in the war photograph as Pont-sur-Sambre, which had long ceased to be the head-quarters of any British division, as Haig's Corps was retreating past it on the east and Smith-Dorrien's to the west by the 24th of August.

Perhaps the most interesting stage of the canoe voyage, reviewed in the light of later happenings, was that lying between Pont and Landrecies. When *Arethusa* and *Cigarette* paddled up the Sambre to this storied town, and thirty years later when I went awheel through the same

country-side, it presented many signs of pastoral prosperity. The river at a point about six miles north-east of Landrecies skirts the forest of Mormal, which, as R. L. S. observes, has "a sinister name to the ear." How sinister he little guessed when he wrote the word. "The breath of the forest of Mormal," he goes on, "as it came aboard upon us that showery afternoon, was perfumed with nothing less delicate than sweet-briar"; its breath in the closing days of August, 1914, must have been acrid with the fumes of war.

Stevenson saw only the south-eastern fringe of this great forest as he paddled along on his way to Landrecies. I had to traverse it awheel in the gathering dusk and contrived to lose my way among its maze of lonesome glades. When I recall to-day the little flutterings of concern which then beset me at the thought of so slight an adventure as being overtaken by the night in these uncharted woodland paths, a vivid sense of dread grips my imagination as I try to picture the immense columns of the Second Corps stringing out in retreat along the western confines of the forest to take up position at Le Cateau for one of the greatest battles in history, while the First Corps lumbered by the eastern roads, through the valley of the Sambre to Landrecies, Allenby's cavalry covering the retreat and engaging in

many skirmishes with the pursuing Uhlans amid the sylvan ways of this forest of the sinister name.

It had been a day of "intense and glaring heat," as one historian records, when the British, weary and battered, got past Mormal and reached the line Le Cateau—Landrecies—Maroilles, with a dangerous gap between the first two points. Meanwhile the Huns had been marching steadily after them behind their cavalry screen, through the forest, thus avoiding aerial observation, and there was to be no rest for the tired Fourth Brigade, holding Landrecies that night, when a steady drizzle of rain followed the sinking of the sun. What happened there on the night of August 25th is admirably recorded by Mr. John Buchan in his *History of the War*.

"The outpost line on the northern edge of the town had just taken up position, but no patrols had yet gone to the front. Suddenly out of the shadows of the forest, veiled by the rain and darkness, the German columns advanced with a rush. A spatter of rifle fire from the pickets gave the alarm, but the thin line was swept away, and while our Guardsmen in the town were rushing to arms, a dense mass of the enemy was pouring into the main streets. It was one of the most critical moments of the campaign, but the splendid discipline of our men saved the situation.

In the main street the German column found its advance checked by fire from the front and from the houses. They tried to push on, and then a section of Maxim guns opened on them, and tore a line of dead and wounded through their ranks.

“ They fell back, rallied, and came on again, while other columns tried to work through the side streets and round the town. Everywhere they found their way disputed. Officers and men, each group acting on its own initiative, improvised a defence at all points, and in many places the British Guards and the Germans crossed bayonets in hand-to-hand fight. German batteries pushed close up to the town, and threw shells into it, and soon burning houses gave light to the combatants, who, till now, had been fighting in bewildering darkness. The enemy's guns were so near that at one point a party of our men, driving the Germans before them, came under the fire of six guns at a range of less than two hundred yards. . . .

“ The Guards held their own among bursting shells and burning houses, and gradually beat off the German assault, while Haig successfully held the long line towards Maroilles. It was after midnight when the Germans at last realised that their surprise attack had failed, and the firing gradually died away along the front. They had paid dearly for their enterprise. In the main



street of Landrecies alone there were nearly a thousand of their dead and wounded, and one Jaeger battalion had almost ceased to be."

Such was the dread reality enacted in the sleepy streets of little Landrecies during the Retreat from Mons—those streets that were so much livelier when R. L. S. sojourned here at the old Hôtel de la Tête d'Or, than when I came to the town many years after its fortifications had been dismantled and its garrison removed, to find it as dull a place as any in all Picardy. Less than five years having elapsed since the Franco-German War, when R. L. S. steered his canoe into Landrecies, and the town having been the scene of many a siege in old wars, it still retained some military importance, which prompted him to certain reflections that may be read to-day as singularly apposite :

"In all garrison towns, guard-calls, and *réveillés*, and such like, make a fine romantic interlude in civic business. Bugles, and drums, and fifes, are of themselves most excellent things in nature ; and when they carry the mind to marching armies, and the picturesque vicissitudes of war, they stir up something proud in the heart. But in a shadow of a town like Landrecies, with little else moving, these points of war made a proportionate commotion. Indeed, they were the



only things to remember. It was just the place to hear the round going by at night in the darkness, with the solid tramp of men marching, and the startling reverberations of the drum. It reminded you, that even this place was a point in the great warfaring system of Europe, and might on some future day be ringed about with cannon smoke and thunder, and make itself a name among strong towns."

Unhappily, Landrecies could not make itself a name among strong towns in a time when no town remained "strong" against the fire of modern artillery; but the epic story of the stand of the British Guards there on the night of August 25th has given to it a new and deathless glory.

The rattle of the drums which sounded so frequently during the two days R. L. S. tarried at Landrecies, and the "picturesque irony" that drums are covered with asses' skin, led our sentimental voyager to the writing of a memorable page which will be read anew to-day with a keener sense of the truth it carries under its veil of light philosophy:

" . . . Wherever death has his red flag a-flying, and sounds his own potent tuck upon the cannons, there also must the drummer-boy, hurrying with white face over fallen comrades, batter and

bemaul this slip of skin from the loins of peaceable donkeys.

“Generally a man is never more uselessly employed than when he is at this trick of bastina-doing asses’ hide. We know what effect it has in life, and how your dull ass will not mend his pace with beating. But in this state of mummy and melancholy survival of itself, when the hollow skin reverberates to the drummer’s wrist, and each dub-a-dub goes direct to a man’s heart, and puts madness there, and that disposition of the pulses which we, in our big way of talking, nickname Heroism—is there not something in the nature of a revenge upon the donkey’s persecutors? Of old, he might say, you drubbed me up hill and down dale, and I must endure; but now that I am dead, those dull thwacks that were scarcely audible in country lanes, have become stirring music in front of the brigade; and for every blow that you lay on my old greatcoat, you will see a comrade stumble and fall.”

If the mere beating of drums in old Landrecies led R. L. S. to such profitable reflection, to what epic utterance may not some future genius of our race be moved when he visits this little town where the Guards Brigade performed those deeds of new renown of which we have read above!

From Landrecies to Etreux the canoeists

pursued their voyage on the still waters of the Sambre-Oise canal and thence their canoes were carted by way of Tupigny to Vadencourt, where they were launched in the swift current of the upper Oise.

In my lonely pilgrimage I went awheel as far as Etreux, through a gently undulating country, rich in hop vines, with far views of thickly wooded fields and little hills, on the main road to Guise, along which Haig's Corps continued their retreat after the heroic night at Landrecies, while Smith-Dorrien was staying the German avalanche, half a dozen miles to the west, in that marvellous battle of desperation at Le Cateau. I do not recall a pleasanter picture of rural content than Etreux presented that day, with the clatter of the weavers' shuttles coming through the open doors of little cottages and the thwacks of the thrashers' flails sounding in farm steadings on the sunny outskirts of the town.

The road through Tupigny and Vadencourt kept me close by the Oise of my hero's adventures and it was here, he assures us, on this sedgy stream, wriggling its devious ways by field and woodland, he had some of the happiest moments of his life—where so many of his countrymen were yet to find it the veritable Valley of the Shadow. He could have shouted aloud for pure

joy of living, as he felt himself "scoring points" against "the old ashen rogue" Death, with every stroke of his paddle. The insistent humanity of the man is seen in this passage which conveys the spirit of our life in these days of the Great War better than any contemporary comment I can call to mind:

"I think we may look upon our little private war with death somewhat in this light. If a man knows he will sooner or later be robbed upon a journey, he will have a bottle of the best in every inn, and look upon all his extravagances as so much gained upon the thieves. And above all, where instead of simply spending, he makes a profitable investment for some of his money, when it will be out of risk of loss. So every bit of brisk living, and above all when it is healthful, is just so much gained upon the wholesale filcher, death. We shall have the less in our pockets, the more in our stomach, when he cries stand and deliver. A swift stream is a favourite artifice of his, and one that brings him in a comfortable thing per annum; but when he and I come to settle our accounts, I shall whistle in his face for these hours upon the Upper Oise."

Stevenson came near enough to settling accounts with the old ashen rogue on that reach of the Oise, for he narrowly escaped a watery

grave by tumbling out of his canoe. But he scrambled to safety still clutching his paddle. "On my tomb, if ever I have one, I mean to get these words inscribed : ' He clung to his paddle.' "

By Origny Sainte-Benoite, some eight miles east of St. Quentin, through which the broken but unbowed remnant of Smith-Dorrien's Corps retreated on Noyon from the shambles of Le Cateau, the paddlers were borne on the swelling flood of the Oise to Moy, a little village dear to my memory, as there I was most hospitably received at the "Golden Sheep," though the landlord, knowing nothing of its fame in *An Inland Voyage*, had changed its name to the uninspiring "Hôtel de la Poste." "Sweet was our rest in the 'Golden Sheep' at Moy," says R. L. S., and I could echo this at that later day ; but there has been no sweet rest at Moy since the fateful autumn of 1914, and as the Allies' trenches cut athwart the village before the Huns swept westward again in the spring of 1918, I fear that the "Golden Sheep," the quiet old château, and all the cottage homes of that pleasant little village now make a rubbish heap beside the Oise.

Even by the winding river to La Fère the journey is only a matter of nine or ten miles, and here R. L. S. had one of his happiest adventures. Turned away from a busy inn as "pedlars"—



which I am sure they looked—the canoeists were warmly welcomed at the little *auberge* kept by Monsieur Bazin. “We were charged for candles,” he says, “for food and drink and for the beds we slept in. But there was nothing in the bill for the husband’s pleasant talk nor for the pretty spectacle of their married life.”

When I went there, M. Bazin had long since passed away, his “pretty children” were now fathers and mothers themselves, but Mme. Bazin was still active and calmly contented with her lot, like those splendid provincial women of France, who have shown a heroism in this time of war as sterling as the heroism of their valorous husbands and sons. Here another Stevenson shrine may have vanished, for La Fère lay right in the foremost lines of the trench warfare. As Mme. Bazin explained to me, the town existed “solely for the military.” I wonder how those children of hers, who won the heart of R. L. S. in 1876, have fared in the terror that has come upon their country-side. They have acquitted themselves well, I feel sure, and proved themselves worthy of the lovely pages Stevenson dedicates to the Bazins.

We next follow *Arethusa* and *Cigarette* by the twining river to ancient Noyon, one of the most picturesque towns of Picardy, whose austere and



hoar cathedral has ever a foremost place in my affections.

It was on the evening of the sixth day (August 18th) of the Retreat from Mons that the whole of the British Expeditionary Force came together along this river Oise between La Fère and Noyon, a battered but unbeaten army of heroes, who had foiled the most frantic efforts of a vastly superior foe to destroy them. In this "Golden Valley," as it is locally known, though it is a strath rather than a valley, they could snatch a little rest and for one day it looked as though the Retreat was at an end; but on Sunday morning, the 30th, the Retreat had to begin again towards Compiègne and finally to the Marne (September 3rd) where the tide turned at last and all the sacrifice of our glorious countrymen 'twixt Mons and Marne was splendidly redeemed.

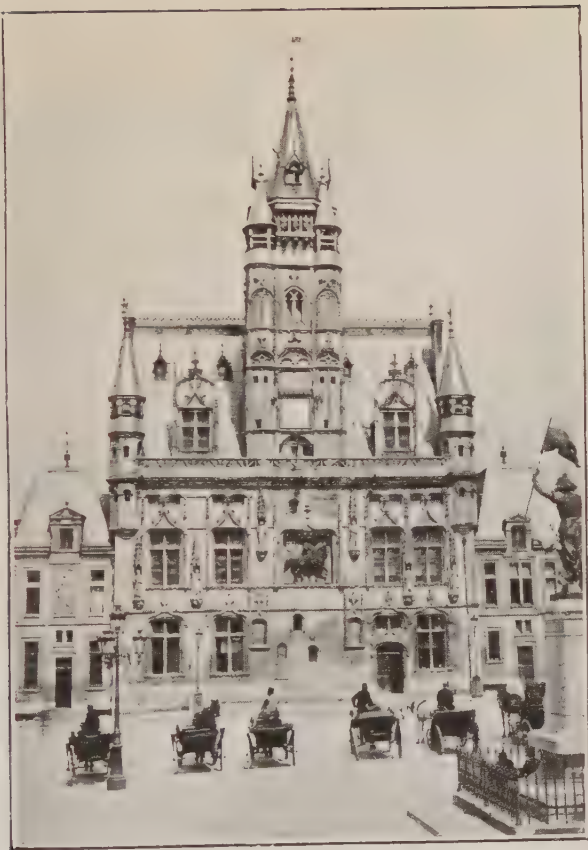
The grand old Cathedral and the beautiful Town Hall which carried us back in its architecture to mediæval twilight and renaissance dawn, were the peculiar glories of this grey old city of Picardy, where, nearly twelve centuries ago, the great Charlemagne was crowned. Among all the dainty cameos of Stevenson's descriptive art, I know none more instinct with charm and "the spirit of place" than that of Noyon Cathedral:

"I have seldom looked on the east-end of a

church with more complete sympathy. As it flanges out in three wide terraces and settles down broadly on the earth, it looks like the poop of some great old battleship. Hollow-backed buttresses carry vases, which figure for the stern lanterns. There is a roll in the ground, and the towers just appear above the pitch of the roof, as though the good ship were bowing lazily over an Atlantic swell. At any moment it might be a hundred feet away from you, climbing the next billow. At any moment a window might open, and some old admiral thrust forth a cocked hat, and proceed to take an observation. The old admirals sail the sea no longer ; the old ships of battle are all broken up, and live only in pictures ; but this, that was a church before ever they were thought upon, is still a church, and makes as brave an appearance by the Oise."

He confesses that he is never weary of great churches. "It is my favourite kind of mountain scenery." And again : "Mankind was never so happily inspired as when it made a cathedral."

"I could never fathom how a man dares to lift up his voice to preach in a cathedral. What is he to say that will not be an anti-climax ? For though I have heard a considerable variety of sermons, I never yet heard one that was so expressive as a cathedral. 'Tis the best preacher



COMPIÈGNE TOWN HALL.

"My great delight in Compiègne was the Town Hall."—R. L. S.



SCENE AT PONT-SUR-SAMBRE.

"Away on the left a gaunt tower stood in the middle of the street."—R. L. S.



THE SAMBRE AT MAUBEUGE.

"It was at this point, 'on the Sambre canalised,' that the canoe voyage began in earnest."—R. L. S.

itself, and preaches day and night ; not only telling you of man's art and aspirations in the past, but convicting your own soul of ardent sympathies ; or rather, like all good preachers, it sets you preaching to yourself ;—and every man is his own doctor of divinity in the last resort."

Truly, to-day " the dead have all the glory of the world," for it was good to die in the belief that the Gothic glories of Reims and Ypres and of Noyon were imperishable. What would Stevenson's pen have written had he lived to suffer the knowledge that the Hun tribes, under their new Attila, that swept westward in a mad orgy of destruction heralding the Great War, made the loveliest cathedrals of Flanders and Northern France the chief targets of their artillery ? One of the few happy moments that I experienced in the third year of the war was the news that Noyon, which, in the triumphant recoil from the Marne the Allies had failed to retake, was rescued safely on March 18th, 1917 ; and one of the saddest came just one year later when I read that the gallant French had to withdraw, that the Hun was enclosing Noyon once again and the old grey cathedral was burning. " In the little pictorial map of our whole Inland Voyage," says R. L. S., " which my fancy still preserves, and sometimes unrolls for the amusement of odd



moments, Noyon Cathedral figures on a most preposterous scale, and must be nearly as large as a department. . . . If ever I join the Church of Rome, I shall stipulate to be Bishop of Noyon on the Oise." I am glad to think that the gentle writer was long removed from the strange world of new horrors and sleeping securely far away on Vaea Top when Noyon Cathedral was given to the flames by the vandal invaders.

At Compiègne, that charming, historic town which has lain in the war zone from the beginning of September, 1914, when there was hard fighting in the woods near by, and where civilian life has so long endured amidst endless alarms, the ceaseless thunder of guns and the stir of military movement, Stevenson set down some observations on the military preparations of that time, which one reads again with heightened interest to-day :

"Reservery and general *militarismus* (as the Germans call it) were rampant. A camp of conical white tents without the town looked like a leaf out of a picture Bible ; sword-belts decorated the walls of the *cafés* ; and the streets kept sounding all day long with military music. It was not possible to be an Englishman and avoid a feeling of elation ; for the men who followed the drums were small, and walked shabbily. Each man inclined at his own angle, and jolted to his own



convenience, as he went. There was nothing of the superb gait with which a regiment of tall Highlanders moves behind its music, solemn and inevitable, like a natural phenomenon. Who that has seen it can forget the drum-major pacing in front, the drummers' tiger-skins, the pipers' swinging plaids, the strange elastic rhythm of the whole regiment footing it in time—and the bang of the drum, when the brasses cease, and the shrill pipes take up the martial story in their place? . . .

“But though French soldiers show to ill advantage on parade, on the march they are gay, alert, and willing, like a troop of fox-hunters. I remember once seeing a company pass through the forest of Fontainebleau, on the Chailly road, between the Bas Breau and the Reine Blanche. One fellow walked a little before the rest, and sang a loud, audacious marching song. The rest bestirred their feet, and even swung their muskets in time. A young officer on horseback had hard ado to keep his countenance at the words. You never saw anything so cheerful and spontaneous as their gait; schoolboys do not look more eagerly at hare and hound; and you would have thought it impossible to tire such willing marchers.”

There was much else that occupied his roving thoughts and ever beguiling pen at Compiègne,

but to-day the passages above chosen have a more immediate appeal than his whimsical reflections on the Gothic quaintnesses of the old Town Hall. "I doted upon the Town Hall," he confesses. Alas, even as I write, the Huns are drawing close to Compiègne and to-day the papers print photographs of the Gothic statuettes from the Town Hall being removed to places of safety, so that the scenes on which R. L. S. "doted" may even now have vanished in the smoke of war. But it is an arresting thought that the rampant "reservery and general *militarismus*" which he witnessed so long ago as 1876 were preparatory for the Great War that took nearly forty years more to burst into a world conflagration at the lighting of a maniac monarch on a slave-built throne.

The inland voyagers found a packet of letters from home awaiting them at Compiègne and these broke the spell of vagabondage. The later stages of the journey seem to lessen in interest. Their canoes were bearing them along the widening waters of the Oise not to unknown, adventurous things, but homeward to old familiar ones.

"You may paddle all day long; but it is when you come back at nightfall, and look in at the familiar room, that you find Love or Death awaiting you beside the stove; and the most beautiful adventures are not those we go to seek."

At Pont Sainte Maxence and at Creil they lingered amid scenes where the now familiar horrors of this war were to be enacted. From Pr cy to Pontoise, where they "drew up their keels for the last time out of that river of Oise that had faithfully piloted them through rain and sunshine so long," they were leaving behind them that land of old romance which in these later years was to be known by a name of manifold terrors—"the war zone."

The spirit of the fruitful peace that breathed throughout all that "very smiling tract of country" in the years before the war is preserved for us with the rarest literary art in the pages of *An Inland Voyage* though we of this generation may never know it again as R. L. S. revealed it to us. Literature offers no service more precious to the mind that is seared with the dread realities of these times. Stevenson's ancestors built certain of our great coastwise lights that guide the adventurous mariner home, and he himself in such pages as we have been re-reading has lighted many a beacon to cheer and hearten when the shadows fall.

## THE MAN BEHIND THE BOOKS

BY ST. JOHN ADCOCK

OF course we shall never know the real Stevenson ; you and I may think we do, but if we came to put our ideas of him into words we should find that your Stevenson was not exactly mine, nor mine yours. If he knew himself he was the first man who ever did ; and the rest of us, even the psychologists and psycho-analysts in our midst, do not all weigh him in the same scales, survey him with the same minds, or from the same standpoint. Each is naturally apt to read too much of himself into others, and where those others differ so widely from himself in temperament, outlook and experience that he is unable to do this, his judgment is not the more impartial and reliable but merely the less sympathetic. Carlyle mistook Lamb for a fool because he was sensible enough to be genial, irresponsible, perhaps frivolous in general society ; and if Lamb could have lived to see much of the elderly Carlyle's boorishness, the growling, graceless unsociability with which he disconcerted many of his humble admirers, his habit of walking

abroad conspicuously clothed and then professing irritation that he attracted the notice of the vulgar, he might have mistaken the sage of Chelsea for a pretentious and rather silly old gentleman.

My affection for Dickens has to make headway against a strong dislike of his dreadful fancy waistcoats and such love of crude domestic display as Mrs. Carlyle attributes to him in some of her recently published letters. The worst things in Byron were his callousness and his insincerities ; he was never genuinely in love with anybody but himself, and it was characteristic of him that he could write to a friend disparagingly of his Maid of Athens, saying he had got rid of her with difficulty and how glad he was to have done so, and in the next hour sit down and compose his maudlin " Maid of Athens, ere we part." I would like to disbelieve that Addison was treacherous in one of his relations to Pope and that he prosecuted his old friend Steele for a debt when Steele was in distress ; that Shakespeare, in his latter years, lapsed into snobbery and became a somewhat ruthless moneylender ; that Bacon, in his capacity of judge, sullied his greatness by accepting bribes from suitors. Though other sins seem more deplorable, humanly speaking, none is so unforgivable as cruelty and meanness.

But who shall blame any chronicler for telling

everything he could find out about those great men ? It is better they should walk for ever with all their imperfections on their heads than that they should be made partners in any petty post-mortem hypocrisy and the world deliberately deceived into believing they were immune from common weaknesses and phenomenally immaculate ; in the end, they would have suffered from such deception, for truth, like murder, will out, and when a suppressed fact is brought to light, at last, it attracts undue attention and seems the more flagrant because of the attempt that was made to conceal it. The whole value of a biography lies in its presenting the fullest, most faithful picture possible ; if that is not to be done it is ridiculous to write any biography at all. Since Thackeray really had a broken nose, and we should have been aware of it from hearsay even if he had taken care not to be photographed, we could feel no satisfaction in the drawing of an idealist who portrayed him with features as faultless as Apollo's. And the biographical idealist who takes a similar liberty with his subject is equally futile and unsatisfying. If he were writing for children his fancy work might be laudable ; but one assumes he is writing for a public too mature to be invited to join him in playing with dolls. His proper business is to give us the plain facts, all of them, so that we may be



in a position to form our own judgments instead of having to rely blindly on his. The biographies that, for whatever reason, refrain from doing this are obviously of little value, and sooner or later truth will prevail and they will be no more read.

No such biographical aberrations mar the admirable introductions by Mrs. R. L. Stevenson and Mr. Lloyd Osbourne to the *Tusitala* edition of Stevenson's Works.\* Taken together, these introductions (and I hope they will presently be collected into a volume by themselves) give an ample story of Stevenson's life, and a study of his character which is both vivid and candid and must remain indispensable, seeing that it is made by two who knew him most intimately through the best of his working years. The portrait that emerges is no timid fantasia in whitewash, but a veritable many-coloured painting of the man in his habit as he lived. Some, I see, are asking how we are to reconcile this mundane, erring Stevenson with the Vailima Prayers; they might as reasonably ask how we can reconcile the riot of spring with the serenity and sober richness of autumn. Except that he had lost nothing of his high courage and gaiety of spirit, the wiser, much-experienced, more disciplined Stevenson of Samoa had as far out-grown the yeasty, unregenerate

\* Heinemann.

Stevenson of Edinburgh days as the brilliant stylist had outgrown the rudimentary boy whose literary achievements were limited to the formation of pothooks and hangers. Don't they say it is the end that crowns us, not the fight? And though you cannot understand the man unless you know how he was made, to count all the errors of his past to his discredit were as unintelligent as to find ground for disparaging the finished statue in the litter of chips from the marble.

"Of course he was no saint," writes Mr. Lloyd Osbourne, in his Introduction to the "New Arabian Nights." "One would do his memory a poor service by endowing him with all the perfections. His early life had been tempestuously intermixed with those of many women, and I have never heard him express a wish that it might have been otherwise; on occasions he could swear vociferously, and when roused he had a most violent temper; he loved good wine and the good things of life; he often championed people who were not worth championing, impulsively believing in them, and getting himself, in consequence, in a false position. . . . But when this is said, I seem to have come to the end. No human being was ever freer from pettiness, meanness, or self-seeking; none ever more high-minded or sincere;

and none sure was ever possessed of a greater indulgence towards the erring and fallen. In this, indeed, one does see a saintly quality. There were no irreparable sins to Stevenson ; nothing that man or woman might do that was not redeemable ; he had an immeasurable tolerance, an immeasurable tenderness for those who had been cast by the world outside the pale. . . . Intolerant of evil ; almost absurdly chivalrous ; passionately resentful of injustice ; impulsive, headstrong, utterly scornful of conventions when they were at variance with what he considered right—his was a nature that was sure to be misjudged and as surely ridiculed by many.”

One must own that the biographer has some excuse for dishonesty in the prudery of a diminishing section of the public that apparently prefers to be hoodwinked, for this friendly candour and fervent vindication displeases certain idolatrous Stevensonians, who have sternly reproved Mr. Lloyd Osbourne for not emulating the usual biographical duplicity. So it is not surprising that there are murmurs in the air against the disquieting Mr. J. A. Steuart who says, in his new *Life of Stevenson*,\* that he has endeavoured, after interviewing many who were personally acquainted with R. L. S. and after consulting all

\* Sampson Low.

available published and unpublished documents, to build up and unveil dispassionately the character and story of the real Stevenson, extenuating nothing, and setting down naught in malice. He has carried out his purpose very ably and, when all is said, Stevenson gains more than he loses in the process. Had he lived longer and written his autobiography—and, being the man he was, it seems likely he would have done that—I believe Stevenson would have told us everything about himself that Mr. Steuart has now told us about him, and one is justified of that belief not only by all that we otherwise know of him, but by certain of his letters and by some of the long-suppressed verses that he preserved through all his wanderings and that Mr. Hellman and the Boston Bibliophile Society have now made accessible in the *Tusitala* edition of the Poems. I can imagine that Stevenson would be quietly amused at the fuss some have made over these revelations, and that he would be the first to rebuke those critics who have been accusing Mr. Steuart of bad taste because he has written the plain truth. When all is said, what is unpleasant of this truth makes a very small part of two very large volumes; it falls into its right place in the story of Stevenson's life and, seen in due perspective, casts a shadow over a few of his

early years, but unless we are incorrigibly foolish, we can leave that shadow behind us, where it belongs, and need not walk in it to the end, any more than he did himself. After Henley's unmerciful disclosures everyone knew something of Stevenson's youthful lapses, and Mr. Steuart has simply filled in the details so that the worst is made clear and there is no room left for the curious to imagine that it was worse than it was. Another good result of Mr. Steuart's sensible candour is that, incidentally, it vindicates Stevenson's father. Hitherto we have been left to suppose that his harshness toward his son, his anger with and rather bitter estrangement from him, at one period, arose entirely out of their religious disagreements, so that he seemed bigoted and inexcusably intolerant, and one was inclined to blame him for an undue severity ; but when the full facts are fairly set out they amply justify any father's displeasure. Surely, it is as narrow minded, in a sense as prudish, in your dashing Bohemian to be unable to sympathise with the nice conventionalities of the respectable as for the respectable to be unable to sympathise with the revolutionary vagaries of the Bohemian ; and I shall not easily be persuaded that the maturer Stevenson would have wished that anything of his doing should be hidden in order to make



himself appear better, if the suppression involved making his father appear not quite so good, so magnanimous as he was. But we are making too much of all this. Let us be glad that everything has at last come out ; that there can be no more portentous whisperings in corners ; that the secrets are given away, and

“What gives rise to no little surprise,  
Nobody seems one penny the worse.”

Mr. Steuart throws new light on the quarrel between Stevenson and Henley ; and, among other things, he dissipates the legend that “no one was ever proof against the ineffable, all-conquering charm of Stevenson” ; but that was always obviously a legend, for some of his young extravagances, mannerisms, swaggerings, self-conceits could not but have been more irritating than attractive for most people. But he outgrew those crudities, and even while he indulged them there was a riper, sweeter, more gracious depth in his character that atoned for them to those who were intimate enough with him to be aware of it. Who can doubt that the charm was in himself which reaches us through his letters, through many of his essays and in the *Child's Garden*, even if none of his contemporaries had borne testimony to finding it in his baffling personality ?



You have only to read again in Mr. Steuart's pages of such matters as how he flamed into indignant championship of that friend of the lepers, Father Damien, the passionate sympathy and dogged persistence with which he fought for the rights of his island king, Mataafa, of the affection and reverence he won from the natives among whom he lived, the love and loyalty he inspired in those who came into closest contact with him, to feel that your old admiration of him was not misplaced, that, indeed, he was a sort of man who can carry these new disclosures on his back without stooping under the burden. He can not only bear it, as Mr. Steuart says, he would have preferred to bear it ; you cannot doubt that without doubting his so often proved courage and that he was in earnest when he wrote in one of his *Essays Literary and Critical* :

“ There are two duties incumbent on any man who enters on the business of writing : truth to the fact and a good spirit in the treatment. . . . It must always be foul to tell what is false ; and it can never be safe to suppress what is true. . . . He should tell of the wise and good people in the past, to excite us by example ; and of these he should tell soberly and truthfully, not glossing faults, that we may neither grow discouraged with ourselves nor exacting to our neighbours.”

Apply this treatment to him and you discover that the blot on him only seemed of importance so long as they were fussily being hidden. They begin to fade into insignificance when the daylight gets at them.

What irks me most in the character of Stevenson are his small vanities, such as his farcical extravagances of dress. Mrs. Stevenson protests that these arose not so much from native vanity as from his poverty ; somebody presented him, for instance, with a velvet jacket, and as he could not afford another he wore it on all occasions, however inappropriate. If he had not seemed to enjoy being thus conspicuous, and if he had confined his sartorial vagaries to the velvet jacket, this explanation would have appealed to me. For I used to number among my friends a well-known novelist (now dead) who was invariably short of cash and, living in the country, dressed for economy's sake somewhat shabbily. But he was obsessed by a conviction that when he went into London to call on publishers and editors it was essential that he should wear, in order to impress those magnates duly, a tail-coat and a tall hat. He was a big, tough-looking fellow who had roughed it for many years in South Africa, and when you saw the fantastic apparition of him walking down Fleet Street thus arrayed, the tall hat seeming too small for his large head and

the tail-coat fitting him nowhere, it was impossible to believe that any could be so much impressed by this grotesque appearance as if he had gone in his homelier garments. A consciousness that the unwonted glory of his attire attracted the attention of passers-by so troubled him that, to make the ordeal as short as possible, he invariably carried the tail-coat suit to town in a bag and changed into it at the Press Club, where he kept the tall hat in his locker, and as soon as he had finished his business visits he gladly put the detested splendours off at the Club and went comfortably home in his ordinary, unnoticeable clothes. Now I don't think Stevenson suffered from this diffidence. Mr. Steuart says his glaring peculiarities of costume sometimes embarrassed his friends, and tells how, on one occasion, " clad in smoking-cap and the brigand cloak which had caused a sensation at Mentone, he met Andrew Lang walking with someone in Bond Street. Stevenson was jovially cordial, but Lang waved him off. ' No, no,' he said, ' my character will stand a great deal, but it won't stand being seen talking to a thing like you in Bond Street.' "

You will say these were trivial affectations, and so they were, but they were irritating and rather contemptible affectations and, as I say, make it difficult for the reader to realise that

charm of his personality to which his intimates have borne testimony ; they make it as hard to know the real man from written records of him as from his variable photographs, of which he wrote to a correspondent :

“ I have no photograph just now ; but when I get one you shall have a copy. It will not be like me ; sometimes I turn out a capital, fresh bank clerk ; once I came out the image of Runjeet Singh ; again the treacherous sun has fixed me in the character of a travelling evangelist. It's quite a lottery ; but whatever the next venture proves to be, soldier, sailor, tinker, tailor, you shall have a proof. Reciprocate. The truth is, I have no appearance ; a certain air of disreputability is the one constant character that my face presents ; the rest change like water.”

I like him best in his later, riper years, when he was on the Island ; I can believe he was charming then, and arrive at that belief without going outside his own writings. No biography at all would have been far preferable to a biography of him that garbled the facts, the biographer picking and choosing which he would give and which withhold, and so falsifying all ; but if there had been no biography I would never have asked for one, for the thirty-five volumes of this *Tusitala* edition of his works contain all he has written,

including his *Juvenilia*, things he wrote by way of pastime, miscellanies that are now first printed, and without the aid of any biographer, we could find the real Stevenson there, for all, especially his letters, are alive with his personality. Your Stevenson, when we have found him, as I began by saying, might differ from mine in detail, but, take him for all in all, I suspect we should feel the same admiration and affection for him, and am pretty sure we should agree that we could say of him, at the very least, what he wrote of and to James Payn :

“ It is something after all (although not much) to think you are leaving a brave example ; that other literary men love to remember, as I am sure they will love to remember, everything about you—your sweetness, your brightness, your helpfulness to all of us, and in particular those one or two really adequate and noble papers which you have been privileged to write.”

Not much, he says, but the rest is largely vanity, and when so much can be said of any man, at the finish, I think he may go his way well satisfied.

But lest you should suspect that his most uncompromising biographer fails to appreciate him, let me quote something of Mr. Steuart's final judgment. Having told all his story, and criticised the man and his works, “ In the whole



history of English literature," writes Mr. Steuart, "there does not shine a braver, more devoted spirit than Robert Louis Stevenson. . . . I have not concealed his follies. He was human, and therefore fallible ; in certain clear-shining virtues which outweigh many faults he was (as I like to think) human also ; and these too I have endeavoured to set forth as they were. I have said that he can bear the truth ; and on that principle this book is written. . . . I do not find that he ever failed a friend in the hour of need . . . it was a principle of his nature to abhor meanness, chicanery, and all that goes with these. Above all, there shines in him an unflinching fidelity, a consuming devotion to an ideal. Of the shirker, the coward, there was not an atom in his composition." And from his courage, he says, came, "almost as a matter of course, other virtues in which he was conspicuous—generosity, love of justice, an eager humanity, a passion for the happiness of the race." You may not accept all Mr. Steuart's other opinions ; some of his comments are debatable ; but he is to be congratulated on having given us a full biography of Stevenson on lines that Stevenson himself laid down in his essays ; a biography that is competent and impartial, and has the crowning merit of being profoundly interesting.



## STEVENSON

BY ALFRED NOYES

STEVENSON is in some ways the most intimately known personality in our literature. Many others—though not so many as a section of recent criticism would have us believe—have left greater masterpieces in the world ; few have left so vivid and affectionate a memory. Many years ago Sir James Barrie wrote a poem on Stevenson, in which he made Scotland herself say :

“ I’ve ha’en o’ brawer sons a flow.  
My Walter more renown could win ;  
And he that followeth at the plough,  
But Louis was my Benjamin.”

It throws a strange light on the human spirit, and its independence of space and time, to reflect that this intimacy, which enables his readers to follow the very tones of his voice, to see the sparkling of the brown eyes, to hear his whimsical laughter, was deepened and quickened by his isolation in a remote world. The vanished Tusitala—as he signed himself in that moving and prophetic last letter to Mr. Edmund Gosse—

is here, living and breathing, among us to-night ; flashing that brilliant smile upon us, eager as ever to press forward on the great adventure of art and life. But it was there, among his island palm-trees, with the sound of the Pacific around him, that he discovered his own country, and that his country learned to know him. There is a more potent annihilator of space and time than wireless telegraphy, and we did not need his own epitaph to tell us that he had found it. All Scotland is in that other letter from the South Seas to his old Scots nurse :

“ MY DEAREST CUMMY,—This goes to you with a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. The Happy New Year anyway, for I think it should reach you about *Noor's Day*. I dare say it may be cold and frosty. Do you remember when you used to take me out of bed in the early morning, carry me to the back windows, show me the hills of Fife, and quote to me :

“ ‘ A’ the hills are covered wi’ snaw,  
An’ winter’s noo come fairly.’

It is indeed an immortal memory now.

“ Blows the wind to-day, and the sun and the rain are flying,  
Blows the wind on the moors to-day and now,  
Where about the graves of the martyrs the whaups are crying,  
My heart remembers how !

"Grey recumbent tombs of the dead in desert places,  
 Standing-stones on the vacant wine-red moor,  
 Hills of sheep, and the homes of the silent vanished races,  
 And winds, austere and pure !

"Be it granted me to behold you again in dying,  
 Hills of home ! . . ."

It was granted, and more than granted ; for if ever a man saw those hills, it was the author of those lines while he was writing them.

The poetry of Stevenson has never received its full due ; for in this country all diversity of genius is regarded with suspicion. Slight as is the volume of his verse, it is all on the level of the permanent things ; and, at its best, his lyrical note is enchanting as that of Herrick. Indeed, in *Our Lady of the Snows*, in *Youth and Love*, and in his *Requiem* he strikes a more poignant note than Herrick ever struck. I have dwelt elsewhere on the originality of some of his verse-movements. The lines to his wife :

"Trusty, dusky, vivid, true,"

the poem to an air of Diabelli, the exquisite *Let Beauty Awake*, are entirely his own in movement ; and the fact that there is nothing startling about the novelty is merely another proof that we are still only at the beginning of metrical invention in quite simple forms. He was one of the first

to use the two pairs of long stresses in antitheses—

“Green days in forests and blue days at sea,”

which so many later writers have employed ; and there are many other technical devices which he either invents or uses more felicitously than almost any other poet. One of these is the concealed internal rhyme :

“Yet shall your ragged moor receive  
The incomparable *pomp* of eve. . . .”

He uses this in a way that gives an extraordinary compactness to his line. In his blank verse, too, he has naturalised the classical manner in our modern tongue more happily than any other writer of the nineteenth century, with the exceptions of Tennyson and Landor. The concealed rhymes, the variation of the position of the pauses, the structure of the verse paragraph—all are masterly :

“I heard the pulse of the besieging sea  
Throb far away all night. I heard the wind  
Fly crying and convulse tumultuous palms.”

His quiet influence on later poetry, too, has been overlooked. It is not necessary to go to the Greek Anthology to discover where the Shropshire lad learned to flute a country tune so haunting :

“It is the season now to go  
About the country high and low . . .  
The brooding boy, the sighing maid,



*Photo by T. Patrick,  
Edinburgh.*

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.



R-- courtesy of Messrs. Cassell.

STEVENSON IN HIS STUDY AT VAILIMA,  
DICTATING TO MRS. STRONG.



Wholly fain and half afraid,  
 Now meet along the hazel'd brook  
 To pass and linger, pause and look."

The very manner, the very cadence, the very note—all are there in Stevenson ; and it was from Stevenson, too, that the splendid phrases on the hour " when heaven was falling," and the shoulders that " held the sky suspended," were quarried :

"For those he loves that under-prop  
 With daily virtues Heaven's top,  
 And bear the falling sky with ease. . . ."

There is more life in the moods of the earlier poet, and a sounder, because a more comprehensive, philosophy ; but there is no doubt whatever that Stevenson was the fountain-head of the later lyrics. The variety of the verse in Stevenson, and the more difficult measures that he often invents and uses so effectively, have a more durable charm than that of the more monotonous metres of the later poet. But Stevenson's poems have had a wider influence than this. Ballads like *Ticonderoga* have had a numerous offspring in later years. The use of the definite article in the following lines has been familiarised to us by Mr. Kipling, and it points to Stevenson even more than to the old ballads as one of the influences upon some of the later poet's powerful work :

“ When I was at home in my father’s house  
In the land of the naked knee,  
Between the eagles that fly in the lift  
And the herrings that swim in the sea . . .

“ There fell a war in a woody place  
Lay far across the sea,  
*A war of the march in the mirk midnight*  
*And the shot from behind the tree,*  
*The shaven head and the painted face,*  
*The silent foot in the wood. . . .”*

In the first of these cases, Stevenson is far the more comprehensive poet ; in the second, of course, Mr. Kipling has the wider range. But there is a perfection of form in all Stevenson’s work that gives it a permanent place among the best of its kind.

One may add here that this applies only to the work that he himself chose to publish. A very strong protest ought to be made against the carelessness which has allowed some of his rough drafts to be published in a recent edition as “ New Poems.” Everyone knows the beautifully finished little lyric which opens *Treasure Island* :

“ If sailor tales to sailor tunes,  
Storm and adventure, heat and cold,  
If schooners, islands, and maroons,  
And Buccaneers and buried Gold,  
And all the old romance retold  
Exactly in the ancient way,  
Can please, as me they pleased of old,  
The wiser youngsters of to-day ;

“ So be it and fall on . . .”

Among the "New Poems" there is a rough draft, or rather a series of jottings and emendations and repetitions, which is printed thus :

"Of Schooners, Islands and Maroons,  
 And Buccaneers and Buried Gold,  
 And Torches red and rising moons,  
 If all the old romance re-told  
 Exactly in the ancient way,  
 Can please, as me they pleased of old,  
 The wiser youngsters of to-day,  
 So be it, and fall on ! If not—  
 If all the boys on better things  
 Have set their spirits and forgot—  
 So be it and fall on ! If not—  
 If all the boys on solid food  
 Have set their fancies . . ."

And so on, with other repetitions and other emendations, to the end. This is by no means the only example. A dreadful hash is made of the beautiful poem to an air of Diabelli. In one case, a muddle is made of emendations and corrections in two poems, and the result is served up as a single "new poem." That this kind of thing can be done with the work of so exquisitely conscientious an artist as Stevenson is scandalous in itself, and no condemnation can be too severe for it. But that it should be allowed to pass without condemnation is also indicative of the chaotic state of a great part of modern criticism.

There is, of course, to-day a "reaction"

against Stevenson ; but it is time that criticism should recognise the reactions of fashion when it sees them, and refuse to be swayed by them. They occur, quite mechanically in many cases, through all our literary history, and they indicate only the mental instability of those who are blindly swayed by them, for they have no relation whatsoever to real values. It is entirely right that there should be new developments in literature ; but it is entirely wrong that these new developments should blind us to the excellence achieved by the past. It seems impossible at the present day to get criticism to recognise those two complementary halves of the truth simultaneously. Your modern critic will have it that you must be a supporter of one half of the truth or of the other, either a reactionary or a progressive. It was not a reactionary, but the apostle of European freedom, Mazzini, who once said that he felt it his duty to protest earnestly against these blind reactions in literature, these cavillings at the achievements of past generations. He saw that these " reactions " were too often a mere cloak for mediocrity, which always hates the man who is a master of his craft, the man who has had the temerity to labour so arduously and finish so thoroughly that his work acquires the time-defying quality of the diamond, and

challenges posterity with a lucid perfection which it may well despair of rivalling.

He wrote always with that sensitiveness to the inner meanings of words which is essential to their right use. He would never have written, as Mr. Bennett wrote in one of his most admired passages, of "a banner waved by an expiring arm." The meaning of the verb expire, to emit the breath, is not prehistoric; and in all good writing that meaning is retained even when it is used figuratively. Time may expire; but in literature neither an arm nor a leg should be allowed to do so. These members of the body are the very last portions of the material universe to which a word describing a function of the lungs and the mouth should be applied. A boot might as well be called a respirator; and the misuse of the word is of exactly the same kind as the misuse of "transpire" for "happen" at which Mr. Kipling (a master, always, of the right use of words) has so happily smiled in one of his poems. These are not trivial or academic details. They affect the whole texture of the work; and only the man who has mastered them can evoke from words all the magic and power and beauty that lie hidden in them. There is no other way by which he can fully express himself in literature. To say one thing when you really

mean another is not enough ; nor are rough approximations enough. Failure here connotes many other defects. The slap-dash criticism of the hour may be too hurried to note them ; but they make all the difference between the enduring and the ephemeral. Excellence in these things is not common. It is extremely rare. This is one aspect of what Stevenson meant by " style " when, out of his passionate devotion to literature and its traditions, he struck that note of fear for its future : " The little artificial popularity of style in England tends to die out. The British pig returns to his true love, the love of the styleless, of the shapeless, of the slap-dash and the disorderly. There is trouble coming, I think ; and you may have to hold the fort for us in evil days."

This prophecy, nearly half a century old now, has been justified by events, and more than justified ; for it is clear enough to-day that the tendency of which he spoke was part of a larger movement of the whole body of civilisation towards something like a new barbarism, a barbarism that is all the more dangerous because its lowering of the standards is often superficially amusing. It appeals to everything that is lazy in us, everything that is tired of restriction, and of the more difficult way. So-called practical



men often seem to think that literature is a sort of polite amusement, without any bearing on the larger affairs of their own world. The Englishman looks at the books in his own house, and is blind to the millions of their kind that circulate like beneficent or hurtful bacilli through the body politic, not only of this country, but also of that great country across the Atlantic where more than a hundred million souls now read our tongue. To walk through a public library in California, and note the scores of books by British writers on those distant shelves, is to realise that the men of letters of to-day have something in trust ; and that if they are false to their trust, or are careless about it, they are undermining a great tradition, and perhaps even hurting their own country. To catch a glimpse of the beautiful little Stevenson monument in San Francisco (far more beautiful than any monument that his own country has yet erected to him, and, indeed, one of the most spontaneous tokens of international affection in the world to-day) is to realise that Stevenson in his devotion to literature was perhaps even truer to his trust than he knew ; and it was his own exquisite sensitiveness to that trust that made him hear the first distant footsteps of the barbarous enemy. He anticipated the peril of civilisation through his

devotion to literature ; for it is in the art and letters of a nation that you may discover the first symptoms of anything really profoundly wrong. It is through art and letters—the expression of a people’s inner life—that the moving finger writes the *Mene, Mene*, on the walls of nations. The doom was clearly written there before Rome fell. It was clearly written there before the French Revolution ; and it was clearly written there before the downfall of Russia. It is not clearly written in the literature of England ; for there are many conflicting tendencies. But there are many of the outward signs of intellectual chaos, the loss of any really fundamental conviction, and the degradation of the standards of art and life. Recently, coming out of a theatre, I heard two of the audience discussing a new play. “ Very interesting,” said one of them, “ but the morality was at least ten years old.” It would be interesting to know what Stevenson in his capacity of the “ shorter-catechist ” would have had to say about this. I imagine that it might have led to a brief “ counter-blast ironical ” which would have cleared the air immediately.

The one great natural fact that needs to be impressed upon the world to-day is the fact that without law there is no freedom. There is no freedom even for the traffic in a city without

law ; and when you come to the consideration of the freedom of the spirit in the infinitely more complicated and exquisite traffics and discoveries of art, its dependence upon law is even more certain. There is an absurd idea to-day that genius is opposed to law. It is often opposed to arbitrary pedantries ; but on law, in the larger and nobler sense, its very life depends. " The spirit of the artist," as even the opium-eating genius who wrote *Kubla Khan* said, " must of necessity circumscribe itself with rules." It must embody itself in order to reveal itself ; but a living body is of necessity an organised body, and what is organisation but the connection of parts in and for a whole ? This is a necessity of the human mind, and all nations have felt and obeyed it in the invention of metre and measured sounds as the vehicle of poetry ; and in the laws of order, harmony, and proportion that govern the cadences of prose." It is quite obvious that all this has a bearing on the wider modern tendencies of which I have spoken.

The two literary artists of the nineteenth century who most clearly understood all that is implied by this, and exemplified it in their own technique, and might therefore have the most salutary influence at the present moment, were, in poetry, Tennyson (against whom the heathen

were raging with complete lack of understanding until quite recently) and, in prose, Robert Louis Stevenson, against whom they are just beginning to turn their weapons.

Stevenson was not only the first artist in prose of the latter part of the nineteenth century. A great painter once said of him that he was the first living artist in any form. "I don't mean writers merely, but painters, and all of us. Nobody living can see with such an eye as that fellow, and nobody is such a master of his tools." There was at least one respect in which he was a greater artist than Sir Walter Scott, and that was his unerring instinct for selection of the significant detail. Art can almost be defined, on one side, as selection. "Give me a blue pencil," he once said, "and I will make an epic out of a daily newspaper."

It seems to be commonly supposed to-day that style in literature means a preoccupation with unessential forms and a consequent lack of everything that would really interest the reader. It means, of course, exactly the opposite. It means, first of all, the expression of a vital personality; and, on the technical side, it means the selection by that personality of the significant detail, the significant word, the significant cadence, that suggest far more than themselves, and so

enable the writer to economise the reader's attention. It was one of the greatest intellects in English literature who said that the problem of poetry, at its highest, was that of putting the infinite into the finite. It is, in fact, the problem of all art at its greatest—to touch the temporal with the light of the eternal, to use the seen as a means of shadowing forth the unseen; by a process where much is represented in little.

Stevenson's view of the function of art at its highest was just this. He expressed it in that little prose-poem which is to be found in one of his letters to W. E. Henley :

“ Sursum Corda  
 Heave ahead !  
 Here 's luck !  
 Art and blue heaven !  
 April and God's larks,  
 Green reeds and the sky-scattering river,  
 A stately music,  
 Enter God ! ”

“ Ah, but you know,” he continued, “ until a man can write that Enter God, he has achieved no art, none ! Come, let us take counsel together and make some.”

All creative art, in other words, is symbolical ; the burden that, as Wordsworth said, would otherwise be too heavy to support rests upon words and symbols, where much is represented

in little. But did the light-hearted Stevenson, that son of joy, really carry his own theory into practice? Let us take him, for instance, at his airiest, in that delightful little volume which he once thought of calling "Penny-Whistles." In the *Child's Garden of Verses* we have a perfect example (itself in little) of how the poet can use small things to symbolise and shadow forth greater things. We find him there selecting the very simplest and clearest and best words; toiling, like his own monkish scribe, to give his thoughts just that lucidity which at last reflects, like a mountain-pool, a corner of blue heaven. But because there is no sign of effort, it is supposed by the unintelligent to be achieved without pains, and because it is so crystal-clear that it takes the infinite to its heart, it is supposed by turbid and shallow minds to be without any depth at all.

It may at first appear that the little poem with which he opens the *Child's Garden* is but a very small pail of clear water :

" I have to go to bed and see  
The birds still hopping on the tree,  
Or hear the grown-up people's feet  
Still going past me in the street."

I do not want to touch it with any more significance than it will bear; but does not a star



begin to be reflected, faintly and tremulously, in that small pail of clear water when it is recalled that Tusitala himself was destined to leave, a little early, the life and the art that he loved so well.

“ And does it not seem hard to you,  
When all the sky is clear and blue,  
And I should like so much to play,  
To have to go to bed by day ? ”

It is clear enough that much is represented in little by the shadow-march of the North-West passage. It is familiar enough as a child's poem. Consider it, for a moment, from our own point of view, here in this little lighted room, on a little planet, flying through the immensities of the universe :

“ All round the house is the jet-black night,  
It stares through the window-pane ;  
It crawls in the corners, hiding from the light,  
And it moves with the moving flame.

“ Now my little heart goes a-beating like a drum  
With the breath of the Bogie in my hair ;  
And all round the candle the crookéd shadows come  
And go marching along up the stair.

“ The shadow of the balusters, the shadow of the lamp,  
The shadow of the child that goes to bed—  
All the wicked shadows coming, tramp—tramp--tramp,  
With the black night overhead.”

The book is full of good-nights and good-byes.

The Unseen Playmate is in it ; and there is even—so great is the magic of its art—a reduction to its very simplest terms of the greatest of all political problems. Half the wars of the world would have been avoided if, in our individual lives and in our national lives, we all fully understood the exquisite elfin satire of one poem in the *Child's Garden of Verses*—the poem on foreign children :

“ Little Indian, Sioux or Crow,  
Little frosty Eskimo,  
Little Turk or Japanee,  
Oh ! don't you wish that you were me. . . .

“ Such a life is very fine ;  
But it's not so nice as mine,  
You must often, as you trod,  
Have wearied, *not* to be abroad.

“ You have curious things to eat,  
I am fed on proper meat ;  
You must dwell beyond the foam,  
But I am safe and live at home.”

There is all the pathos of human aspiration, I had almost said the pathos of human religion, in the last stanza of *The Lamplighter*, which deliberately in its first line adopts the fallacy which Voltaire satirised in *Candide*, and deliberately uses in its last line a cadence that, delicately as it is touched in, has unmistakable undertones :

"For we are very lucky, with a lamp before the door,  
And Leerie stops to light it as he lights so many more ;  
And oh ! before you hurry by with ladder and with light,  
O Leerie, see a little child and nod to him to-night."

These child-poems, in fact, illustrate Stevenson's peculiar gift of self-limitation. He writes always like a man who is telling tales to children. Sometimes it is a kind of self-parody, masking behind a half-smile the more serious thoughts that he would hesitate to wear upon his sleeve. He seizes, for instance, a very simple image, the image of the candle surrounded by shadows—and it was an image that Shakespeare used before him—to represent much in little.

The lines to Minnie, in the *Child's Garden of Verses*, contain a perfect example of Stevenson's use of this imagery, and of what may be called the poetry of candle-light at its simplest, though even the child might suspect that there was something deeper here than the echo of a nursery rhyme :

"The river, on from mill to mill,  
Flows past our childhood's garden still,  
But ah, we children never more  
Shall watch it from the water-door  
Below the yew—it still is there—  
Our phantom voices haunt the air  
As we were still at play,  
And I can hear them call and say,  
" *How far is it to Babylon?* "

“ Ah, far enough, my dear,  
Far, far enough from here—  
Yet you have farther gone !  
*Can I get there by candle-light ?*  
So goes the old refrain.  
I do not know—perchance you might—  
But only, children, learn it right,  
Ah, never to return again !

“ The eternal dawn beyond a doubt  
Shall break on hill and plain,  
And put all stars and candles out  
Ere we be young again.”

Another wonderful use of candle-light is in *The Master of Ballantrae*, where the duel is fought between the two brothers among the frosted trees by the steady light of two candles in the windless night. You remember what use he makes of those two points of light to enhance the deadly stillness of that scene: how the body of the Master was left lying in their light under the trees; and how, later on, Mr. Mackellar creeps back, guided by their distant brightness, to find one of the candle-sticks overthrown, and that taper quenched; the other burning steadily by itself, making all within its circle of light, by force of contrast with the surrounding blackness, brighter than day; showing the bloodstain in the midst, and the silver pommel of a sword; but of the body not a trace.



*Photo by T. Patrick, Edinburgh.*

IN THE HALL AT VAILIMA. LYING IN STATE.  
“He lay in the hall which was ever his pride, where he had passed the gayest and most delightful hours of his life, a noble room with open stairway and mullioned windows.”—From Lloyd Osbourne's account of the death and burial of Stevenson.—*The Letters of R. L. Stevenson*, Edited by Sir Sidney Colvin. (Methuen.)





Photo by T. Patrick, Edinburgh.

"There he was laid to rest, and in after-time a large tomb in the Samoan fashion, built of great blocks of cement, was placed upon the grave. On either side there is a bronze plate; the one bearing the words in Samoan, 'The Tomb of Tustala,' followed by the speech of Ruth to Naomi from the Samoan Bible; 'Whither thou goest I will go. . . .' At the sides of the inscription were placed a thistle and a hibiscus flower. Upon the other panel, in English, is his own Requiem:

'ROBERT LOUIS

1850

STEVENSON,

1894

'Under the wide and starry sky,  
Dig the grave and let me lie. . . .'

*Life of R. L. Stevenson.* By Graham Balfour. (Methuen.)



Then, too, there is that other haunting scene in *Treasure Island* which, though it wears the outward form of a boy's adventure-story, is from beginning to end suffused with poetry, by the sheer magic of an art that rejoiced in its narrow room and its self-imposed limitations as another might rejoice in the set form of a sonnet.

Consider, for instance, that candle-lit scene where Jim Hawkins and his mother open the dead buccaneer's sea-chest ; how significant is each carefully selected detail in the catalogue of what they discover there ; and representative of how much in little ; until it seems that in a few sentences the whole life and character of the old buccaneer are passed before you. They find " an old boat-cloak whitened with sea-salt on many a harbour-bar, a piece of bar silver, an old Spanish watch, and five or six curious West Indian shells." It has often set me thinking since that he should have carried about these shells with him in his wandering, guilty, and hunted life. All through the scene you are conscious that, beyond the little ring of candle-light, beyond the boy's adventure-story, there is that deeper night and that deeper thought. He uses the candle-light, as he used the ticking of the clock, to fulfil the task of the artist, and to set the temporal in relation to the eternal. This is what distinguishes

*Treasure Island* from almost all other boys' books, and makes it an artistic masterpiece, an enduring contribution to English literature. Those superior critics of to-day who are beginning to talk of it as an example of the false picturesque can have neither eyes nor ears for his real achievement, which was that of an exquisitely subtle artist in something like a new form of poetry. Just as in the *New Arabian Nights* he subtly parodies the Oriental tales, so in *Treasure Island* he subtly parodies his own boyhood's delight in pirates, does it so delicately, with so delicious a whimsicality, so tenderly even, that its effect is infinitely heightened, as when a man is able to smile at his own enthusiasm and hold something in reserve. There are many respects in which the effect of certain scenes among Stevenson's pirates are on a smaller scale quite legitimately comparable with the effect of the grave-digger's scene in *Hamlet* : Dick with his Bible ; Silver persuading his comrades that the voice that they had heard in the woods could not have been that of a spirit :

“ Sperrit ? Well, may be,” he said. “ But there's one thing not clear to me. There was an echo. Now, no man ever seen a sperrit with a shadow ; well, then, what's he doing with an echo to him, I should like to know ? That ain't in natur', surely.” All these things, with Israel

Hands' conclusion that if the spirit lives on, the killing of men is waste of time, belong to the kingdom of the mind ; and, for all the simplicity of their terms, they are of the essential stuff of poetry.

The most consummate masterpiece of poetry in any language is probably that in which Shakespeare drew the symbolical figure of Hamlet against the dark background of Eternity. In a lighter mode, but with art hardly less consummate within its own deliberate self-limitation, Stevenson essayed a similar task. This is nowhere more apparent than in certain chapters of the *Ebb-tide*, a book whose greatness has never been fully appreciated. You remember the scene in which the three would-be murderers, Hay, the broken-down university man ; Davis, the American sea-captain ; and Huish, the Cockney clerk, are seated at dinner with their intended victim, Attwater, on the lamp-lit verandah of his island-bungalow, a little lighted stage, surrounded again by the immensities of the ocean-night ; and how Attwater, that strange sardonic figure who, under the mask of a sneering man of the world, concealed a religious passion so intense that his apparently chance-dropt words shook and pierced through the conscience of Hay, as the words of Hamlet overwhelmed that other murderer.

Consider this scrap of their conversation, where the murderers are trying to discover whether Attwater is really alone on his island.

"I must say this sherry is a really prime article," said Huish. "'Ow much does it stand you in, if it's a fair question?"

"A hundred and twelve shillings in London," said Attwater. "It strikes one as not really a bad fluid. So glad you like it. I was about to say that I have still eight dozen," he added, fixing the captain with his eye. "It seems almost worth it in itself—to a man fond of wine."

Huish and the captain sat up and regarded him with a scare.

"Worth what?" said Davis. "A hundred and twelve shillings," said Attwater.

With a great effort the captain changed the subject.

"I allow we are about the first white men on this island, sir," said he. "Too retired by 'alf," said Huish, "give me the sound of Bow Bells."

"This was once a busy shore," said Attwater, "although now, hark, you can hear the solitude. I find it stimulating. And talking of the sound of bells, kindly follow a little experiment of mine in silence."

There was a silver bell at his right hand. He struck it with force and leaned eagerly forward.

The note rose clear and strong ; it rang out clear and far into the night, and over the deserted island ; it died into the distances until there only lingered in the porches of the ear a vibration that was sound no longer. " Empty houses, empty sea, solitary beaches," said Attwater, " and yet God hears that bell ! And yet we sit here in this verandah on a lighted stage with all heaven for spectators, and you call that solitude."

" That is a queer idea of yours," said the captain at last. " So you mean to tell me that you sit here evenings and ring up, well, ring on the angels by yourself. . . ."

" As a matter of historic fact," said Attwater, " one does not. Why ring a bell, when there flows out from oneself and everything around one a far more momentous silence ? The least beat of my heart and the least thought in my mind echoing into eternity for ever and for ever and for ever."

" O, look 'ere," said Huish, " turn down the lights at once and the Band of 'Ope will oblige. This ain't a spiritual seance."

" No folk-lore about Mr. Huish," said Attwater.

It is this sense of the eternities in his work that differentiates *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, with its wild closing gleam of candle-light, from almost all novels of what is called " sensation." This is



the secret of those wonderful fables—or parables, for all his work has something of that quality in it—*Markheim* and *Will of the Mill*. We are aware constantly that we are seeing things here under the eternal aspect. *Will of the Mill*, too, holds the clue to all his *Songs of Travel*, and tells us whither even the armies that the child saw in the glowing fire are marching. The clue is in that extraordinarily beautiful passage about the troop of wandering men who once encountered a very old man shod with iron. The old man asked them whither they were going, and they answered with one voice, “to the Eternal City.” He looked upon them gravely. “I have sought it,” he said, “over the most part of the world. Three such pairs as I now carry on my feet have I worn upon this pilgrimage, and now the fourth is growing slender underneath my steps; and all this while I have not found the City.”

“All this while I have not found it!” If this were the final note of his work it would be in a sense a denial of the profound truth which he expressed in the little prose-poem on art which I quoted earlier. It is not possible for the mere intellect of man to find that infinitely distant and inscrutable City; but the creative spirit, like the spirit of love, has reasons of which, as Pascal said, the mere reason knows nothing. The poet, the



creative artist, in certain great gleaming moments, flashes to certainties, and does catch sight, though only through mists, of the hidden walls of that City, but (and here I want to suggest a ground where we can disagree with Stevenson, because he profoundly disagrees with himself) when he wrote merely as a thinker he lost sight of his own goal. In one of his most moving letters he wrote a passage which has a great significance for the present day, and strikes the keynote of much of our modern scepticism, of the nobler sort.

“ Yes ; if I could believe in this immortality business, the world would indeed be too good to be true ; but we were put here to do what service we can, for honour and not for hire. The sods cover us ; and the worm that never dies, the conscience, sleeps well at last. These are the wages, besides what we receive so lavishly day by day ; and they are enough for a man who knows his own frailty. Nor is happiness, eternal or temporal, the reward that mankind seeks. Happinesses are but his way-side campaigns. His soul is in the journey and in the struggle. How, then, is such a creature, so fiery, so pugnacious, so made up of discontent and aspiration, how can he be rewarded but by rest ? ” There is a Roman pride in the passage ; but I believe that he was here, for once, utterly wrong. The true answer

to his question is that so fiery a spirit as he describes can neither proceed from the dust nor be finally subjected to the dust that is so much less than itself. Science and religion are at least at one on this fundamental principle, that the greater cannot be derived from, or ended in, the less; and, moreover, in that passage Stevenson was writing not as Attwater, but as one of the other characters in the *Ebb-Tide*. I wish I could find words to express my conviction that it is just here that the great part of the modern intellectual world is making its most tragically retrograde step. The great men of former generations climbed with difficulty to a certain height of spiritual vision, from which they saw the eternal significance of human life. If once the human race becomes convinced that there is no real ultimate significance, no final aim to be achieved by all its passionate strivings, then indeed our civilisation cannot long be held together. It is not a matter that the individual can airily throw aside as if only he were concerned. We have no right, even out of a sense of our personal unworthiness, to deny that great hope of all human affection, that somehow, somewhere, there is an eternal justice, infinitely greater, not less than our own. Nor can the human reason (without annihilating itself and the very methods that

lead to its results) abandon the assumption, the postulate (the faith, if you choose to call it so) that the universe has a meaning, in all its details, and in the ultimate harmony of the united whole. We know that the day will come when not only ourselves but the whole human race will have vanished, and the cold earth will be carrying around the dying sun only the graves of those who once talked so bravely of progress here. But this knowledge does not close or fathom the infinite mystery even of our own existence ; nor could those great poets of the nineteenth century whom Stevenson acknowledged to be greater than himself believe that the soul of man, and that great pathetic on-sweep of humanity through all the ages, were to end finally in the dust. The answer of Browning was far more profoundly true ; not because it was a happier vision, but because he saw more completely all the stern facts that were involved. Because those facts made a demand upon his own conscience, he felt that they made an eternal demand also. He did not shrink from reality. He faced the facts and saw that if they had no final solution the whole of our life became a diabolical and damnable farce. He spoke as

“ One who never turned his back but marched breast forward,  
Never doubted clouds would break,

Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would  
triumph,  
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,  
Sleep to wake."

And when Stevenson's work arose, as it often did, from the deep inner well-springs of poetry, he believed this too; nay, more, he assumed it; for, though he stated it less explicitly, and it seemed to give him little more than "half of a broken hope for a pillow at night that somehow the right is the right," what are all these veins of glory and fire that he said he was able to see in the very mire of life? And what is that thing not seen with the eyes for which he was ready to contend, and fail, and be mauled to the earth, and arise and struggle on for ever? The significance of poetry is sometimes deeper than the mere surface-meaning of the words. The music of that word "home" in his own epitaph:

"Home is the sailor, home from sea,  
And the hunter home from the hill,"

means more than a mouthful of dust. It is the music of the Absolute Reality; and that is not a silence, not a void, but a consummation.

## NOTES

THE literary contents of this volume are, to some extent, an anthology compiled from back Numbers of THE BOOKMAN that are in constant demand but have long been out of print, and we are indebted to the authors of these and of other essays and poems for permission to include them here.

Our thanks are due to Sir Sidney Colvin for the loan of the examples of Stevenson's handwriting, which we reproduce in this book. Nobody knew R. L. S. more intimately than Sir Sidney Colvin, who was always one of his closest friends, and remained his adviser and constant correspondent to the end. By his editing of Stevenson's Letters Sir Sidney has placed all Stevensonians under a lasting debt of gratitude. The article in this volume, "When Stevenson was Young," is extracted from Sir Sidney Colvin's *Memories and Notes*, with his permission and that of his publisher, Mr. Edward Arnold.

*The Island of the Blest*, from which, on page 51,

we extract a description of R. L. S., was written by Mr. Gosse in 1879, and he now confesses that the characters in this poem were studied from his associates of that day, and in particular from intimate friends. Stevenson was pictured in it under the name of Cynthius, and the picture is a very careful study of the man he then was, at the age of twenty-nine—a very different personality, of course, from the staid and more responsible Stevenson of later years. This gives the stanzas now a certain historical value, and we are therefore the more obliged to Mr. Gosse for permitting us to reprint them here and to make this interesting disclosure concerning them.

The poem, "To Tusitala in Vailima," on page 69, was the dedication to Stevenson by Mr. Gosse of his volume, *In Russet and Silver*, which is now included in his *Collected Poems*. Some lines in it proved strangely prophetic, and it has a peculiarly poignant interest in that it was one of the last things Stevenson read; and the last letter he wrote, two days before he died, was to Mr. Gosse acknowledging the receipt of the volume: "Let me speak first of the dedication. I thank you for it from my heart. It is beautifully said, beautifully and kindly felt; and I should be a churl indeed if I were not grateful,



and an ass if I were not proud. I remember when Symonds dedicated a book to me ; I wrote and told him of ' the pang of gratified vanity ' with which I had read it. The pang was present again, but how much more sober and autumnal—like your volume. Let me tell you a story, or remind you of a story. In the year of grace something or other, anything between '76 and '78. . . . ' Then follows the story, revealing a charming instance of Mr. Gosse's friendliness to R. L. S. and expressing a wistful doubt whether at the time the teller of the story had sufficiently appreciated that friendliness. Every lover of Stevenson's letters knows the story, and because of it gives Mr. Gosse a special place in his heart.

We are very much indebted to Mr. Lloyd Osbourne for most kindly acquiescing in the reproduction of several of the contents of this volume and especially for permission to reproduce the pencil drawing made by Stevenson at Monastier, and to reprint "How I first saw Stevenson," an extract from his Introduction to *New Arabian Nights*, in the Tusitala Edition of Stevenson's Works, which is published by Messrs. Heinemann, whom we have also to thank for permitting us to use this extract, and for other assistance, including the obtaining of similar

permissions for us from Stevenson's other publishers, Messrs. Chatto & Windus, Messrs. Cassell and Messrs. Longmans, who are associated with Messrs. Heinemann in the publication of the Tusitala Edition, and to whom also we are grateful for this and for other courtesies acknowledged elsewhere.

The appearance of "The Pavilion on the Links" marked a turning-point in Stevenson's literary career. "He stole quietly into the world of fame," Justin M'Carthy writes in his *History of Our Own Times*. "Most of us heard of him for the first time, a great many years ago, when a remarkable story, a short story, appeared in the *Cornhill Magazine*, called 'The Pavilion on the Links,' signed with the initials 'R. L. S.' None of us then had the least idea as to the identity of the writer of the story, but some of us, at all events, felt satisfied that a new and fresh power had arisen in English literature." And in his *Stevensoniana*, that invaluable storehouse of all that concerned Stevenson, Mr. J. A. Hammerton summarises and partly reprints the essay in which Sir A. Conan Doyle said, in 1890, that "'The Pavilion on the Links' marks the high-water mark of his genius, and is enough in itself, without another line, to give a man a permanent place among the great story-tellers of the race."

Since *Kidnapped* was first published, in 1886, edition after edition has had to be printed to meet the unending demand for the story of David Balfour's adventures and his exploits in the company of the doughty Alan Breck, one of the noblest soldiers of fortune that has ever flashed through the pages of a book. In the opinion of the author *Kidnapped* was his best, indeed his only good story, and the one he liked best himself, a judgment which is to some extent confirmed by so acute a critic as Mr. Henry James, who said that it represented the best work of Stevenson up to 1887, averring that "the episode of the quarrel of the two men on the mountain-side is a real stroke of genius and has the very logic and rhythm of life." In a copy of the book that he presented to Dr. E. L. Trudeau, at Lake Saranac, Stevenson wrote :

" Here is the one sound page of all my writing,  
The one I'm proud of, and that I delight in."

We are indebted to Mr. John Lane for permission to reproduce two of Mr. Charles Robinson's delightful illustrations from *A Child's Garden of Verses*; to Messrs. Cassell for permission to reproduce in monochrome one of the colour illustrations by Mr. Wal Paget from *The Master of Ballantrae*, several of the portraits and sketches from the Pentland Edition of Stevenson's works,

and illustrations from certain of their editions of *Treasure Island*, *Catriona*, etc.; and to Messrs. Chatto & Windus for permission to reproduce illustrations from "The Pavilion on the Links," and from other books of Stevenson's published by them.

One of the most intimate links with Stevenson was broken by the death of his old nurse, "Cummy," Miss Alison Cunningham, who died at Edinburgh on the 17th July, 1913, in her ninety-second year. He dedicated *A Child's Garden of Verses* to her—"the angel of my infant life." Some of his happiest letters are to her, and to the end of his day he remembered with gratitude her loving services. She was buried in Morning-side Cemetery on the 21st July, 1913, and among the flowers that were laid upon her grave was a beautiful wreath from Mrs. R. L. Stevenson, and roses and honeysuckle sent by Lord and Lady Guthrie from the garden of Swanston Cottage. This touching and graceful tribute "To Alison Cunningham" appeared in the *Paisley Express* over the initials W. A. M.—which stand for the Rev. Walter A. Mursell:

"The comfortable hand is still  
That smoothed the snow-white Pillow-Hill,  
Hushed is the kindly voice that read  
The stories to the Boy a-bed ;

That calmed the fear and soothed the pain  
 Till morning light returned again.  
 And had you done no more than this,  
 The world your gentle hand would kiss ;  
 The sick child in your sunshine grew—  
 Ah ! Cummy, what we owe to you.

“ Now you have left us for a while  
 And gone to seek your Treasure Isle,  
 The Last Adventure you have gone,  
 But you will not fare forth alone,  
 For your ‘ ain laddie ’ sure will know  
 The way your weary feet must go ;  
 The spirit of a little child  
 Will come from out the unknown wild  
 To take the comfortable hand  
 That led him through the uneven land.  
 Ah ! Just like God, this thing to do,  
 To send with eager steps for you  
 Death’s Angel in the form of ‘ Lou.’ ”

W. A. M.

Messrs. Longmans, the original publishers of *A Child's Garden of Verses*, issue the book in a beautiful edition containing twelve full-page colour plates and numerous illustrations in black-and-white by Jessie Wilcox Smith ; and in a handy pocket edition, with an introduction by Andrew Lang. Amongst other editions, they issue one for the pocket also of *The Wrong Box*, *The Dynamiter* and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

Messrs. Chatto & Windus first published a Collected Edition of Stevenson’s Poems, *A Child's*



*Garden of Verses*, which had always hitherto been published separately, being then for the first time included with the rest of his poetical work. Stevenson the Novelist has somewhat overshadowed Stevenson the Poet, except so far as *A Child's Garden of Verses* is concerned, and the popularity of that, the most delightful book of its kind, has perhaps done some little injustice to *Underwoods*, the *Ballads*, and the rest of his poetry. As readers of his letters know, Stevenson never took himself seriously as a poet. "You may be surprised to hear," he wrote to Henley in 1883, "that I am now a great writer of verses; that is, however, so. I have the mania now, like my betters, and faith, if I live till I am forty, I shall have a book of rhymes like Pollock, Gosse, or whom you please. Really, I have begun to learn some of the rudiments of that trade, and have written three or four pretty enough pieces of octosyllabic nonsense, semi-serious, semi-smiling. A kind of prose Herrick, divested of the gift of verse, and you behold the Bard. But I like it."

Later, in 1887, Stevenson wrote to J. A. Symonds: "I wonder if you saw my book of verses? It went into a second edition, because of my name, I suppose, and its *prose* merits. I do not set up to be a poet. Only an all-round



literary man : a man who talks, not one who sings. But I believe the very fact that it is only speech served the book with the public. Horace is much a speaker, and see how popular ! Most of Martial is only speech, and I cannot conceive a person who does not love his Martial ; most of Burns also, such as 'The Louse,' 'The Tooth-ache,' 'The Haggis,' and lots more of his best. Excuse this little apology for my house ; but I don't like to come before people who have a note of song and let it be supposed I do not know the difference."

In a letter to Sir Sidney Colvin, the same year, he remarked that " the success of *Underwoods* is gratifying. You see, the verses are sane ; that is their strong point, and it seems it is strong enough to carry them."

All of which is true, but far from the whole truth. The wistful tenderness of feeling, the high seriousness, the whimsicality, the quaint and delicate fancifulness of Stevenson play through his poems as they do through his letters. " After reading the new book, the *Underwoods*," wrote Mr. Gosse, when it was published, " we come back to *A Child's Garden* with a clearer sense of the writer's intention, and a wider experience of his

poetical outlook upon life. The later book helps us to comprehend the former ; there is the same sincerity, the same buoyant simplicity, the same curiously candid and confidential attitude of mind. If anyone doubted that Mr. Stevenson was putting his own childish memories into verse in the first book, all doubt must cease in reading the second book, where the experiences, although those of an adult, have exactly the same convincing air of candour. . . . His *Underwoods*, with its title openly borrowed from Ben Jonson, is an easy book to appreciate and enjoy, but not to review. In many respects it is plainly the work of the same fancy that described the Country of Counterpane and the Land of the Story-books, but it has grown a little sadder, and a great deal older. There is the same delicate sincerity, the same candour and simplicity, the same artless dependence on the good faith of the public. The ordinary themes of the poets are untouched ; there is not one piece from cover to cover which deals with the passion of love. The book is occupied with friendship, with nature, with the honourable instincts of man's moral machinery. Above all, it enters with great minuteness, and in a very confidential spirit, into the theories and moods of the writer himself. It will be to many readers a revelation of the everyday life of an author whose impersonal

writings have given them so much and so varied pleasure. Not a dozen ordinary interviewers could have extracted so much of the character of the man himself as he gives us in these one hundred and twenty pages."

That Stevenson derived no little of his character from his father is evident from the essay on "Thomas Stevenson," in the *Memories and Portraits*:—"He was a man of somewhat antique strain: with a blend of sternness and softness that was wholly Scottish, and, at first, somewhat bewildering; with a profound essential melancholy of disposition and (what often accompanies it) the most humorous geniality in company; shrewd and childish; passionately attached, passionately prejudiced; a man of many extremes, many faults of temper, and no very stable foothold for himself among life's troubles. Yet he was a wise adviser; many men, and these not inconsiderable, took counsel with him habitually. . . . He had excellent taste, though whimsical and partial; collected old furniture, and delighted specially in sunflowers long before the days of Mr. Wilde; took a lasting pleasure in prints and pictures; was a devout admirer of Thomson of Duddingston at a time when few shared the taste; and, though he read little, was constant to his favourite books.

He had never any Greek ; Latin he happily re-taught himself after he had left school, where he was a mere consistent idler : happily, I say, for Lactantius, Vossius and Cardinal Bona were his chief authors. The first he must have read for twenty years uninterruptedly, keeping it near him in his study, and carrying it in his bag on journeys. Another old theologian, Brown of Wamphray, was often in his hands. When he was indisposed he had two books, *Guy Mannering* and *The Parent's Assistant*, of which he never wearied. He was a strong Conservative, or, as he preferred to call himself, a Tory ; except in so far as his views were modified by a hot-headed chivalrous sentiment for women. He was actually in favour of a marriage law under which any woman might have a divorce for the asking, and no man on any ground whatever ; and the same sentiment found expression in a Magdalen Mission in Edinburgh, founded and largely supported by himself. . . . His talk, compounded of so much sterling sense and so much freakish humour, and clothed in language so apt, droll, and emphatic, was a perpetual delight to all who knew him before the clouds began to settle on his mind. His use of language was both just and picturesque ; and when, at the beginning of his illness, he began to feel the ebbing of this power, it was strange

and painful to hear him reject one word after another as inadequate, and at length desist from the search and leave his phrase unfinished rather than finish it without propriety."

Stevenson's first book was *The Pentland Rising*, published in 1866, when he was sixteen years of age; this was followed two years later by that "little skit," as he called it, *The Charity Bazaar*. When he was writing to Sir Sidney Colvin in 1894 as to what of his work should be included in a Collected Edition, he was doubtful about *The Charity Bazaar*, and said "I don't think it will do"; but he had no hesitation concerning *The Pentland Rising*, and wrote with emphasis, "I heartily abominate and reject the idea of reprinting *The Pentland Rising*. For God's sake let me get buried first."

Although he was so youthful when his first work was printed, Stevenson was far from being a precocious genius. His literary career did not begin in earnest till 1878; he made his first considerable success with *Treasure Island*, in 1883, and cannot be said to have arrived at actual popularity till *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* made its sensational appearance in 1886. As everybody knows, he was a slow and painstaking worker;



nevertheless, in the sixteen years of his active literary life—from 1878 to 1894, the year of his death—that he got through with an enormous amount of work is sufficiently evidenced by a list of his books :

*An Inland Voyage* (Kegan Paul, 1878).

*Edinburgh* (Seeley, 1878).

*Travels with a Donkey* (Kegan Paul, 1879).

*Virginibus Puerisque* (Chatto & Windus, 1881).

*Familiar Studies in Men and Books* (Chatto, 1882).

*The New Arabian Nights* (Chatto, 1882).

*The Silverado Squatters* (Chatto, 1883).

*Treasure Island* (Cassells, 1883).

*Prince Otto* (Chatto, 1885).

*The Dynamiter*, in collaboration with Mrs. Stevenson (Longmans, 1885).

*A Child's Garden of Verses* (Longmans, 1885).

*Kidnapped* (Cassells, 1886).

*Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (Longmans, 1886).

*Memoir of Fleeming Jenkins* (Longmans, 1886).

*Memories and Portraits* (Chatto, 1887).

*Underwoods* (Chatto, 1887).

*The Merry Men, and Other Tales* (Chatto, 1887).



- The Black Arrow* (Cassells, 1888).  
*The Wrong Box*, in collaboration with  
 Lloyd Osbourne (Longmans, 1889).  
*Father Damien* (Chatto, 1890).  
*Ballads* (Chatto, 1890).  
*The Master of Ballantrae* (Cassells, 1891).  
*The Wrecker*, in collaboration with Lloyd  
 Osbourne (Cassells, 1892).  
*Three Plays: Deacon Brodie, Beau Austin,*  
*and Admiral Guinea*, in collaboration  
 with W. E. Henley (Heinemann, 1892).  
*Across the Plains* (Chatto, 1892).  
*A Foot-note to History* (Cassells, 1893).  
*Island Nights Entertainments* (Cassells, 1893).  
*Catriona* (Cassells, 1893).  
*The Ebb Tide*, in collaboration with Lloyd  
 Osbourne (Heinemann, 1894).  
*Macaire*, in collaboration with W. E.  
 Henley (Heinemann, 1895).  
*Songs of Travel* (Chatto, 1896).  
*Weir of Hermiston*, unfinished. Edited by  
 Sir Sidney Colvin (Chatto, 1896).  
*St. Ives*, completed by Sir A. T. Quiller-  
 Couch (Heinemann, 1898).  
*In the South Seas* (Chatto, 1900).  
*Prayers Written at Vailima*. Introduction  
 by Mrs. Stevenson (Chatto, 1904).  
*Essays of Travel* (Chatto, 1905).

*Lay Morals, and Other Papers* (Chatto, 1911).

*The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson.*

Edited by Sir Sidney Colvin (Methuen, 1911).

*Records of a Family of Engineers* (Chatto, 1912).

As this does not pretend to be a full bibliography, the Davoz Platz and other privately printed booklets (now included in the Collected Editions) are omitted. And we shall not attempt to chronicle the numerous editions through which all the books have passed, and are still passing.

There have already been four handsome Collected Editions of the Works of Stevenson:

“The Edinburgh Edition” (Chatto, 1894–1898).

“The Pentland Edition” (Cassells, 1907–1908).

“The Swanston Edition” (Chatto, 1912).

“The Vailima Edition” (Heinemann).

“The Tusitala Edition” (Heinemann 1924).

“The Skerryvore Edition.” Library Edition of “The Tusitala Edition” (Heinemann).

Of books about Stevenson there is a very large and ever-increasing number, including:

*The Life of Robert Louis Stevenson.* By Graham Balfour (Methuen).

*Stevenson.* By Sir Walter Raleigh (Arnold).  
*R. L. Stevenson.* By L. Cope Cornford  
 (Blackwood).

*Stevensoniana.* By J. A. Hammerton  
 (Edinburgh : John Grant).

*Robert Louis Stevenson.* By Isobel Strong  
 (Cassells).

*Recollections of Robert Louis Stevenson in  
 the Pacific.* By Arthur Johnstone  
 (Chatto & Windus).

*Stevenson.* Days with Great Writers series  
 (Hodder & Stoughton).

*Robert Louis Stevenson.* By H. B. Baildon  
 (Chatto).

*In the Track of R. L. Stevenson.* By J. H.  
 Hammerton (Arrowsmith).

*Stevenson's Shrine.* By Laura Stubbs (De  
 la More Press).

*R. L. Stevenson's Edinburgh Days.* By Eve  
 Blantyre Simpson (Hodder & Stoughton).

*The Stevenson Originals.* By Eve Blantyre  
 Simpson (Foulis).

*Robert Louis Stevenson : Some Personal  
 Recollections.* By Lord Guthrie (Edin-  
 burgh : W. Green & Son).

*I Can Remember Robert Louis Stevenson.*  
 By various writers. Edited by Rosa-  
 line Masson (Chambers).

*Life of Robert Louis Stevenson.* By Rosaline Masson (Chambers).

*Robert Louis Stevenson: Man and Writer.* A critical biography. By J. A. Steuart. (Sampson Low).

In 1895 Sir James Balfour Paul (a relative of Stevenson's) contributed to *The Athenæum* a note concerning the portraits of Stevenson, which he revised some years later for inclusion in Mr. J. A. Hammerton's *Stevensoniana*, from which we make some extracts: "It may be interesting, and not altogether without use, to put on record a note of the portraits of this author which have been made at different periods of his life. As he himself acknowledged, he was a difficult subject to paint, and the consequence is that there is not in existence any thoroughly satisfactory likeness of Stevenson. So far as I have been able to ascertain, there are only two finished portraits of him. One is a small full-length by J. S. Sargent, R.A., painted at Bournemouth in 1885, and now in the possession of Mrs. Fairchild at Boston. This portrait is said to verge on caricature, to be "a little more living than life," and has been compared, by one very competent to judge, to a *Vanity Fair* cartoon. The other is a portrait by Signor Nerli, painted in Samoa in 1892. . . . In

addition to the above there is an unfinished oil portrait, not much more than laid on in two sittings by W. B. Richmond, R.A. This was painted about 1885-6.

In sculpture there is :

(1) A large bronze medallion by Augustus St. Gaudens, executed in New York in 1888—a very characteristic work, representing Stevenson in bed, propped up by pillows. The face is in profile, and is considered a pretty good likeness. The medallion is now in Sir Sidney Colvin's possession.

(2) A bust done at Honolulu by Allan Hutchinson.

(3) A bust done at Sydney, believed to be by a French artist.

(4) A medallion done at Honolulu.

The last two have not been seen in this country.

In addition to the above there are a few drawings. One by J. W. Alexander appeared in 1888 in the *Century Magazine*; another was made by William Strang at Bournemouth, and from it an etching was executed.

There are, then, it may be said, three adequate representations of Stevenson—two portraits, one by Nerli and one by Sargent, and the St. Gaudens medallion. The Nerli portrait is apparently the better of the two former—at least Stevenson

himself declared it to be the best likeness ever painted of him, and several of his friends who have seen it say that, though perhaps not altogether what may be termed a pleasant likeness, it is probably a faithful representation of him as he appeared towards the end of his life. There are others, however, who also knew Stevenson well, who hold a contrary opinion, and say that it is not a good likeness—a diversity of opinion which, as we all know, occurs in the case of the majority of portraits that are painted. . . .

The National Portrait Gallery (London) bought in 1899 a pencil sketch of his head by Percy Spence. . . . G. W. Stevenson, sculptor, had a full-length statuette in the Scottish Academy of 1902, but it was not from the life.

Instead of the statuette by G. W. Stevenson, we reproduce the bust by him that is in the Scottish Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh. Sir James does not mention the drawing, by Count Nerli, which we reproduce. The original is the property of Mr. H. Walter Barnett, who very kindly lent it to us for reproduction.

In *Wrack of War* (John Murray, 1918) Mr. J. A. Hammerton who, in *In the Track of R. L. Stevenson*, made a pilgrimage along the route of Stevenson's *An Inland Voyage*, devoted a chapter to recalling "the associations of R. L. S. with



places which were scenes set for his dainty comedy of vagabondage, and which war was later to use for the staging of the world's tragedy." That chapter, "With R. L. S. through the Land of War," is reprinted in this volume by permission of Mr. Hammerton and Mr. Murray.

In the later years of his life Stevenson's position had become assured; he had an unquestionable place among the greatest and most popular authors of his day; yet at the time of his death he was troubled with a fear that his vogue was on the wane. There were not wanting prophets among the critics who suggested that fear to him, or confirmed him in it. But among those who saw more clearly was Mr. G. K. Chesterton, and it is interesting to recall the opinion he held on the permanency of Stevenson's fame when he was reviewing Mr. Graham Balfour's biography, over twenty years ago: "It is said in some quarters that Stevenson has been over-praised, that a reaction has set in against him, that he will not fascinate the next generation. It matters not one rap whether he does or not to anyone who has perceived his absolute solidity, and his eternal use to mankind. . . . Stevenson will win, not because he has friends or admirers or the approval of the public or the assent of the æsthetes. He will win because he is *right*—a word of great

practical import which needs to be re-discovered. He may or may not be eclipsed for a time ; it would be a truer way of putting it to say that the public may or may not be eclipsed for a time. . . . The idea that a great literary man who has said something novel and important to mankind can vanish suddenly and finally is ridiculous. The pessimists who believe it are people who could believe that the sun is destroyed for ever every time it sinks in the west. Nothing is lost in the magnificent economy of existence ; the sun returns, the flowers return, the literary fashions return. If life is a continual parting, it is also a continual heaven of reconciliation."

But Stevenson's fame was never in danger of eclipse ; a new generation has risen since he finished his work, and the interest in his books and in his personality was never stronger than it is now. In the Elegy in his *Robert Louis Stevenson and Other Poems* (John Lane), Mr. Richard Le Gallienne said the last word on this score :

" Virgil of prose ! far distant is the day  
When at the mention of your heartfelt name  
Shall shake the head, and men, oblivious, say :  
' We know him not, this master, nor his fame.'  
Not for so swift forgetfulness you wrought,  
Day upon day, with rapt, fastidious pen,  
Turning, like precious stones, with anxious thought,  
This word and that again and yet again,

Seeking to match its meaning with the world ; . . .  
 Not while a boy still whistles on the earth,  
 Not while a single human heart beats true,  
 Not while Love lasts, and Honour, and the Brave,  
 Has earth a grave,  
 O, well-beloved, for you ! "

The rapid growth of the Robert Louis Stevenson Club (which numbers over a thousand members) is not the least of the many signs of Stevenson's continuing and increasing popularity. It was started at Edinburgh in 1920 ; branches were soon inaugurated in Glasgow and Dundee, and a more recent branch was formed in London and held its first meeting there in October, 1923. Its objects include the holding of meetings at which lectures are given on the life and work of Stevenson, and the fostering of interest in Stevenson's life and influence by the establishment of Scholarships, Prizes, etc., in Schools and Universities. The Club has a very distinguished list of patrons. All particulars concerning it can be obtained in Edinburgh from Mr. Alfred E. Milne, W.S., 65, Frederick Street, Edinburgh, and in London from the Hon. Secretary, Professor G. Currie Martin, or from the Hon. Corresponding Secretary, Miss Hawkins, 59-61, New Oxford Street, W.C.1.

















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